A THEOLOGY THAT MANAGES TRAUMA WITHIN THE RIVER OF LIFE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, INC.

Vernon J. Shazier

BA, Nova Southeastern University, 2001
MDiv, Baylor University, 2004

Mentors

Jamison Hunter, DMin
George Parks, Jr., DMin

A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2025

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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Date: _____

Approved:

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Faculty Mentor:

_____
Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies:

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ABSTRACT

A THEOLOGY THAT MANAGES TRAUMA WITHIN
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The River of Life Fellowship Church, Inc. is the context located in Fort Pierce, Florida. The problem statement is that trauma produces pain, and Christians often struggle with the fact that a good God will permit traumatic experiences to pierce and alter our lives. My hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The methodology was qualitative triangulation research model. The instruments were journaling, pre- and post-tests, interviews, and focus group. I seek to determine if participants gained knowledge on managing trauma.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I look back over these last three years, I openly acknowledge and admit that I could not have accomplished this journey without the help of the Lord. Therefore, I am truly grateful that God's merciful hand continues to guide my life.

I also acknowledge the love and support of my family. My supportive and encouraging wife, Shawn, my son Vernon, II, and my mother, Lee. Thank you for standing by my side through this educational endeavor.

I appreciate the love expressed by my church family, The River of Life. Also, to my administrative assistant, Belinda Pizarrio, thank you for your constant helpful hand that you extended. There are many mentors that have assisted in the accomplishment and to you I express my deep gratitude for the encouraging words, listening ear, and expressed confidence in my abilities to complete the task: Dr. Helen Turnball, Dr. Judith McKay, Dr. David Hodge, Dr. Delvin Atchinson, Bishop Clarence E. Glover, Dr. Johnny K. Bryant, Rev. G. Vincent Lewis, and Dr. Joel Gregory.

To my mentors, Dr. Jamison Hunter, and Dr. George Parks, I am eternally grateful for your guidance, wisdom, support, and encouragement. Finally, to my editor, Dr. Lori D. Spears, and her team, thank you for the expertise that you brought to the table.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son, Ryan Shazier. Due to your injury with the Pittsburgh Steelers, it brought me closer to God and helped me to understand the power of God during traumatic experiences. It is my prayer that the readers of this work will be empowered to seek God and know that God is a very present help in the time of trouble.

INTRODUCTION

This research project seeks to address the overarching issue of traumatic experiences. Many times, people are challenged as it relates to dealing with trauma. Christians go even further to inquire, where was God during a traumatic experience. Or they ponder, how could a righteous and holy God permit trauma to come to their zip codes. The purpose of the research is to help individuals realize that God is in the traumatic experiences and because you experience trauma does not mean that God is not present. The goal of the research is to help individuals understand that trauma is another avenue to witness the true and living God. My hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The research focuses on several foundational chapters that capture trauma from a biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary perspective.

Chapter one highlights the synergistic energy between my context and call to ministry. In evaluating the chosen path provided by God, my formative years and current context consisted of orchestrated synergy by the hand of God. It is no surprise that my early years consisted of traumatic experiences. Watching my parents fight and the secret desire to kill my father are all relative to the need to have a remedy in place to mitigate traumatic experiences. Although the desire to retaliate violence with violence, that was

not the plan that God had for my life. Providentially, God knew that I could assist others with creating ways to manage trauma.

My family experienced trauma when my son, Ryan was injured while playing in the National Football League for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Ryan's injury left me drained, shattered, void, and darting between two opinions of cursing God and asking for forgiveness from God. The struggle of trauma was real and just as my son Ryan was contemplating suicidal moments, secretly, so was I. Eventually, I shifted to a place of what I call my "God Moments," and I learned to trust God. The shift of trusting God occurred because I began to embrace my "God Thoughts" which was a deep reflection of the attributes of God. Focusing on God helped me to manage my anxiety, depression, and negative feelings.

Chapter two gives the biblical perspective of trauma as experienced by Joseph. In evaluating the text of Genesis 50:15-21, it validates trauma as well as provides an example of how Christians are expected to manage traumatic experiences. The text spells out the fact that trauma existed among Joseph and his brothers. The possibility of Joseph holding a grudge is a representation of trauma. The fact that the brothers were fearful of Joseph's possible reactions is also an indication of trauma. Joseph's brothers were traumatized by the fact that Joseph could have sought revenge on them if he operated in a negative space because of the wrongs they had inflicted on Joseph. However, Joseph chose to love his brothers. Despite the fear of Joseph's brothers, Joseph did not negate the fact that God was a forgiving and merciful God. Due to Joseph's relationship with the Lord, he was able to forgive and extend love to his brothers.

Chapter three provides a historical reflection on trauma and helps the reader to understand its importance and relevancy. The history of any topic, field, or study provides relevant insight and understanding. When a researcher takes the time to understand the history of a topic, they are gaining a sense of identity. Historically, this chapter reviews the life of Horatio Spafford and Ryan Shazier. Collectively, both real-life experiences shed light on primary and secondary trauma. More importantly, they both display the ability to cope with trauma and do not surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Both Horatio and Ryan openly admitted that it was their relationship with God and their faith walk that helped them to endure the challenges of their traumatic experiences. Horatio and Ryan are kindred in spirit to Joseph, the young lad with the coat of many colors who grew to be second in command in Egypt. The historical foundation chapter will help the reader gain greater insight as it relates to the relevancy of having a strong relationship with Christ. It will also help the reader to understand that God remains a God of justice when bad things happen to good people. The key is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace your God moments and He will grant you the strength to manage your traumatic experiences. As you learn to manage, you then become an instrument to be used by the Father to help others manage their trauma by the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter four provides a theological perspective on trauma. In the experiences with Joseph, Horatio, and Ryan, they all were inflicted with wounds. Hence, they persevered. It is through the perseverance of being wounded that one portrays the Theology of the Wounded. Throughout this chapter, the reader will gain insight into the Theology of the Wounded, psychological trauma, the concept of suffering, and the

correlation with grief and trauma. After evaluating these specific areas related to trauma, the objective is to have a better understanding of the Theology of the Wounded.

There is a direct correlation between the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences. Once the reader understands the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences, it will assist in the ability to effectively manage trauma. Further, they will see it as a tool to assist others in learning to effectively manage trauma. The project will be designed to assist participants in understanding that once wounded, trauma is not a position to get stuck in. Instead, the woundedness, which generates trauma, is designed to assist the person in helping others to effectively manage their woundedness.

The overarching concept of the Theology of the Wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that they have been wounded to assist others. The wounded eventually will embrace the fact that their woundedness is a part of their life-transforming journey. Upon realizing and or accepting the woundedness, the wounded shift to the position of helping others to be successful in managing their trauma and or wounds. To function in a loving community, it is necessary to understand one's pain and wounds. Korean "(Han)" theology provides a framework to understand and overcome life's challenges.

Chapter five provides an interdisciplinary perspective on trauma through the discipline of psychology as it relates to trauma from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective. When evaluating the discipline of psychology, one can surmise that it is a discipline that studies the mental state, processes, and behavior in humans and animals.[1] In early history, contributors' development of psychology came in the areas of choleric,

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[1] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

sanguine, basic human temperament, and melancholic from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.[2]

Psychotherapy can aid in helping an individual develop coping skills, build resilience, and manage unresolved feelings. Adequate psychotherapy can assist an individual from getting stuck in a negative place. Traumatic experiences can lead to suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other disorders affiliated with trauma. It is critically important to understand the impact of trauma. When obtaining an understanding of traumatic impact, will assist the individual in managing the impact of their trauma.

The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and the project is the mind. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, one can effectively manage traumatic experiences. The most important aspect of the project is to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with your relationship to Christ. Joseph was effective in managing trauma because of his consistent relationship with God. Anger, anxiety, depression, or frustration did not overtake him, although he had multiple experiences with trauma. Joseph's relationship was strong enough to acknowledge, what the devil designed for evil, God turned it into good.

Chapter six provides an overview of the project, the participants, and topics of discussion. The nine participants were engaged in a six-week focus study group. They participated in journaling, pre-and-post-tests, and interviews.

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[2] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This research project seeks to address the overarching issue of traumatic experiences. Many times, people are challenged as it relates to dealing with trauma. Christians go even further to inquire, where was God during a traumatic experience. Or they ponder, how could a righteous and holy God permit trauma to come to their zip codes. The purpose of the research is to help individuals realize that God is in the traumatic experiences and that just because you experience trauma does not mean that God is not present. The goal of the research is to help individuals understand that trauma is another avenue to witness the true and living God. My hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. This chapter will evaluate my formative years and current context which will provide the synergy for the research as it relates to research related to managing traumatic experiences through a theological foundation.

I was born on December 31, 1969, in a small wooden house in Fort Pierce, Florida. My mother lacked insurance, therefore a midwife assisted with my birth. I am the second child of Lee Esther Borders, and I have three siblings including two brothers and a sister. I never had a relationship with my biological father or with my grandparents

because of my maternal grandmother. My mother married [redacted] Shazier when I was three years old, with whom she had a fourth child. He adopted me and my siblings, and we became the Shazier family.

During my early childhood years, my family lacked financially, but we had a lot of love in our home. My mother was a teacher's aide, and my father worked in the orange groves picking fruit. During my sixth-grade year, my family's financial picture changed after my father became an international longshoreman. It seems like our family went from having the least to having the most on our street. However, the joy of living a better life only lasted about one year due to my father's inability to handle financial success. My father's new job enabled him and my mother to purchase new cars, and my siblings and I acquired a great deal of toys. Our house quickly became the house the other children on our street wanted to visit because ours was the only house with an Atari video game.

However, new clothes, new toys, or new cars could ease the pain of the vices my father developed. Our home which was once a peaceful and lovely place became a place of horror. My father's financial success caused him to become entangled in several extramarital affairs. He became a heavy drinker and developed an addiction to cocaine. His vices turned our home into a place where domestic violence occurred regularly. Often my father would come home after being gone for days—sometimes weeks—and when my mother would question him the conversation quickly turned violent. He not only beat my mother, but he also beat me and my siblings. Therefore, at a young age, I developed a deep hatred for my father. Consequently, for most of my grade school and middle school

years, at night I lay in my bed, stared at the ceiling, and fantasized about killing my father. A man we once admired became a monster that we all feared.

As New Year's Day approached, my father's violence increased. In 1985, after my father attacked my mother and threatened to kill her a few days later, my mother took me and my oldest brother, Maurice, to my godmother's house and asked her to let us stay there. She then fled to Fort Lauderdale with my younger brother and sister where my mother's cousin gave them safe shelter. My brother, Maurice, and I were left behind in Fort Pierce to fend for ourselves. My godmother gave us a place to stay but we rarely saw her since she worked at night, and we were in school during the day. Maurice and I found affirmation and acceptance in school since we were gifted athletes though our home situation was a nightmare. After a year away from my mother, Maurice and I went to Fort Lauderdale to visit my mother, our younger brother, and our sister for Thanksgiving.

During the visit, Thanksgiving felt like Christmas to me and when it was time to leave, I begged my mother to let me stay. She told me no because her cousin already allowed three of them to live there. However, the thought of me going back to Fort Pierce was so painful that I went to my mother's cousin, and with tears in my eyes I begged her to let me stay in Fort Lauderdale. I said "I don't need a bed; I'll sleep on the floor. Just let me stay." She said yes and her yes gave my heart joy and Maurice's heart sadness. He was upset that I was abandoning him. I tried to comfort him by saying "You are a senior in high school. You'll be graduating in a few months, so you won't be there much longer." However, I knew my words gave him little comfort.

Shortly after I moved to Fort Lauderdale with my mother, my father learned where we stayed and tracked us down forcing us to move multiple times seeking to

escape my father's violent behavior. One evening I came home from the basketball court and when I saw a police car in the driveway, I knew my father had been there. When I entered the house, my mother immediately instructed me to look for my younger brother. During my father's visit, he began to get physical with my mother and my baby brother hit him in the back of the head with a board. My father chased after him, but he was unable to catch him. My brother's action got my father out of the house, which allowed my mother the opportunity to lock the door and call the police. The next day, I approached a guy with whom I played basketball at the park, and I told him I needed a gun. A week later, I purchased a twenty-two-caliber pistol from him for twenty-five dollars. I knew my father would return to fight my mother and I planned to kill him.

Daily, for several months, I hoped he would show up, but he did not. Then one evening when I was in my room watching television, my brother ran into the room and said, "Daddy is here." I immediately jumped out of bed, ran into the backyard, and retrieved my gun from its hiding place. I rushed back into the house and as I entered the door, I could hear my father arguing with my mother. I ran toward my mother's room and my brother, in a soft voice, said "Shoot him." My brother and I positioned ourselves in the doorway of my mother's room. Once again, he whispered, "Shoot him." I stood there with my gun in my hand behind my back with my finger on the trigger repeating the words "hit her" in my head. I dreamed about that day, and I wanted him to hit my mother so I could kill him. However, for some reason (God), he decided to not fight my mother that day. After he saw my brother and I standing in the doorway, he spoke a few words to my mother before turning and walking out of the house. I was angry! For weeks I asked myself "Why didn't he hit her?" I wanted to kill him. That event took place during my

sophomore year in high school. My father never returned to bother us again and I continued dreaming about killing him.

My first six months living in Fort Lauderdale were challenging and often lonely. The loneliness was short-lived once football season arrived. By the end of football season, everyone knew me, and they gave me the nickname V-Dog. By my senior year, I had more friends than I needed. My senior year began with my mother getting a call from the housing authority informing her that an apartment in the projects was available. That was great news because at the time we lived in one room located in a rooming house. At school, I excelled on the football field, the track, and the basketball court.

However, as my senior year ended, I began to experience more and more sad days. My dilemma was that while I played football (the sport I loved) on the collegiate level, I failed to make rational sense of going to college to play football when my mother lived in the projects struggling to raise four children. One day while I watched the film with a coach and a college scout, I decided to bring my internal drama to an end. I interrupted the film section and told the coach I would not attend college. With a disappointed and puzzled look on his face, he asked, “Why are you not going to college?” I gave him the explanation that I gave all the other coaches that recruited me. I said, “Coach, my family lives in the projects. My mother is working two jobs to take care of four children. I don’t need to go to college. I need to get a job. Therefore, I am joining the military.”

Some of the coaches seemed to understand my situation but some did not and suggested that I made a bad decision. I felt I made the right decision to join the military and help my family financially instead of going to college to play football. However, I

felt robbed of my youth and the opportunity to pursue my dream of playing in the NFL. I was not a Christian then, but I believed there was a God because my mother said there was, and I believed her. At the age of seventeen, I learned not to question God. However, multiple times I asked myself many questions. Why was my family destroyed? Why did we lose our home? Why did my father become a drug addict? Why did my siblings and I receive such brutal beatings that sometimes we could not wear short pants or short-sleeved shirts? And why were my football dreams stolen? During the remainder of my senior year, I enjoyed all the senior activities and graduated then enlisted into the Navy. I thought "San Diego, California here I come!"

I was in ROTC during my high school years, so I was not a complete novice to military commands and behaviors. During my time in the Navy, I kept fifty to a hundred dollars of my pay for myself and mailed the balance home to my mother. The military was not where I wanted to be, but the experience was of great value to me. During my time in the Navy, my thoughts about manhood and life began to develop. I learned the importance of discipline, character, time management, and teamwork. Athletics planted these seeds in me before I joined the Navy. However, in the military, I learned how to use these disciplines to be successful in the real world. Practicing these skills, paired with my highly competitive nature enabled me to excel and distinguish myself from my peers in boot camp, A School, and on my ship. I still think and live part of my life like a soldier.

After leaving the Navy, I returned home to Fort Lauderdale. I immediately got a job and enrolled in college to obtain a degree in engineering. My mother still lived in the project apartment with my younger brother and sister. Moving them out of the project apartment was at the top of my agenda. After my first year of college, due to my military

experience working in telecommunications, I landed a job with Motorola. The pay was twice what my mother made; therefore, it enabled me to help my family move out of the projects. As I blossomed in my new job, one of my high school friends and teammates, Steve, returned home to Fort Lauderdale to accept a teaching and football coaching job at the high school from which we both graduated. Shortly after Steve started his new job, he invited me to coach football. I told him no and that I did not have the time to coach football, but truthfully, I was still scarred from being unable to play college football.

After we graduated from high school, I had to join the military to help support my family while Steve attended Ole Miss and played football. I gave Steve every excuse I could think to keep from coaching football; however, he ignored them all and insisted on me coaching and joining his staff. Despite the internal feelings and emotions, I dealt with, I agreed to accept the job of defensive coordinator at our high school alma mater—Boyd Anderson High School. Steve and I experienced success immediately, and after my third year of coaching football, I was convinced that being a football coach was my calling and destiny. My goal for life became to learn everything I could about football. I watched films most nights, read every book about defense, and attended multiple football clinics and camps.

In 1995, I prepared to attend a football camp at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Before leaving, I told my mother I was going to Tampa to attend a football camp, and she insisted I stay with my godmother, Pat. While at Pat's house, her husband joined the conversation and shifted it to religion and God; it was not a conversation I wanted to have, but out of respect for Leonard, I listened and participated. Afterward, I felt a sense of spiritual conviction, so I called my girlfriend, Shawn, before I went to sleep and told

her I wanted us to start going to church. As far as I was concerned, my spiritual matter was resolved. In my formative years, church was a regular part of my life. After graduation from high school, church attendance consisted of twice a year. Leonard was relentless with the church business and the next day introduced me to a gentleman named Charles. He introduced himself as Pat's nephew and informed us that he recently graduated from seminary and was pastoring a church. I did not know what seminary was, but I felt it had something to do with religion. I was right.

Charles' conversation focused on me. Once again, I was in a God conversation; however, this time, it was two against one. After about five minutes of what felt like preaching to me, Charles said, "Vernon, can I ask you a question?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Vernon, if you died today, and you were standing before God and God said, 'Give me one reason why I should let you into heaven?' What reason would you give Him?" The question caused me to put down my fork, put my head into my hands, and gave thought to what answer I could give God. After thinking, it troubled me that I failed to think of a legitimate answer. Once again, like Friday night, a conviction came over me, but this time it was one I never experienced before. I lifted my head, looked at Charles, and said, "I don't have an answer to that question, but I want one." The next thing I remember is standing outside in my godmother's driveway with Charles and Leonard, praying for forgiveness and asking Jesus Christ to come into my life. That was not the weekend I expected to experience.

After my salvific moment, I asked Charles and Leonard what I should do next. They told me to find a Christian church to join once I returned to Fort Lauderdale. Monday morning, I left Tampa with a different person. My four-hour drive felt like ten

hours. So many questions filled my mind because I entered Tampa devoid of thoughts about God, but after giving my life to Christ I could not get God off my mind. I was excited about my new journey, but also nervous and afraid because I failed to know what it meant or what life would be like for me going forward. I needed someone to talk with, so I detoured north to my small hometown of Fort Pierce to visit my best friend, Tony. When I shared my experience with him, he just laughed at me. Tony failed to believe me, and that troubled me. I drove to Fort Lauderdale, but after the bad experience with Tony, I was afraid to talk to my girlfriend about my Tampa experience and new journey. I was overwhelmed with anxiety about how she would respond and wondered if Shawn would share this journey with me or react like Tony.

For three weeks, I said nothing about my conversion to anyone, but by the end of the third week, I knew I could not avoid the conversation with Shawn any longer. I took her to the movies and afterward, while sitting in the car, I said "Shawn, there's something I need to tell you." My facial expression indicated it was something serious, which probably made her nervous or anxious. "Something happened a few weeks ago when I went to the football camp in Tampa," I told her. "You know I stayed with my godmother after my mother badgered me into it. And while I was there, her husband and her nephew double-teamed me by engaging me in a conversation about God. Well, I decided to give my life to Christ. I do not know what all this entails, but I want to try this Jesus thing. If this is not something you are interested in, I understand." She said nothing for about ten to fifteen seconds, then said, "I'm going with you." I felt like a thousand pounds were lifted off my shoulders. Her response gave me the courage to share my experience with my family and a few friends. Three weeks later, we went to the courthouse and got

married. For three months, we kept our marriage a secret while I was in chess mode trying to figure out my next move. I had a lot to figure out in less than two months I became a Christian and married. After being married for three months, we decided to tell our mothers and siblings, whose responses were a combination of shock, surprise, and anger. Everyone was happy we married, yet they were disappointed that we failed to have a traditional wedding. Once I returned to Fort Lauderdale, I immediately began my search for a church home. After a month-long search, I found my new church home and remained there for two decades.

About three months after the revival, the church had an evening service for the pastor's anniversary. While attending the revival, I will never forget what I call my Star Trek Moment. At some point during the service, I slipped into a trance that took me back to a long-forgotten childhood memory from seventh grade. I used to take a shortcut between two houses to get home from school. Normally, I did not see anyone at either house, but one day, two elderly men sat on the front porch of one of the houses. As I took my shortcut between the two houses, one of the men stood up and walked toward me. I became nervous because I thought he was about to reprimand me for cutting through his yard. However, when the older gentleman said the oddest thing: "Boy, you're going to be a preacher. You walk just like a preacher." "Yes sir," I replied. I was so nervous that I kept walking without even making eye contact with him. I forgot that experience. When I came out of my Star Trek Moment, I became conscious of my surroundings just in time to hear the guest preacher announce his sermon title: "Don't Forget Your Calling." Immediately, psychologically I was a wreck because I was convinced that through the preacher God spoke to me.

I spent the next several weeks wrestling with what happened on the balcony and wondering what it meant. Was God asking me to be a preacher? Being a preacher was the furthest thing from my mind because I was a football coach. After a few weeks of struggling with my balcony experience, I introduced myself to the pastor of the church. I told him I thought God wanted me to be a preacher. He told me to go pray about it and see what the Lord had to say, which I did for three weeks. When I returned and told him I still thought God wanted me to be a preacher, once again he told me to go pray. After another three weeks, I went back to him again, this time he told me I needed to go before the church and tell the congregation I believed God wanted me to be a preacher.

I said, "Okay," but I left his office angry. I thought he tried to test or embarrass me. I told him three times that I thought God wanted me to be a preacher, so why did I have to stand before 2,000 people and tell them? I later learned that it was neither a test nor an attempt to embarrass me but church protocol. The following Sunday, I stood nervously before the congregation and told them I believed God wanted me to be a preacher. After the service, the pastor informed me that I needed to preach my trial sermon, which took place on Superbowl Sunday, 1996. I had no homiletic training, but I was used to giving speeches as a football coach. After preaching my trial sermon, the pastor gave me $1000 and a list of about eight books to purchase before telling me to use the balance of the money to catch up on my bills.

After preaching my trial sermon, I enrolled in college to pursue a degree in psychology. It took me about five years to graduate because I took time off each year during football season. During the time, I served as an associate minister at the church, I developed a relationship with a guest preacher who spoke at our church twice a year.

During one of his visits, as I approached graduation, I informed him that I would be graduating in the fall and that I was looking for a seminary to attend. He asked me if I considered Baylor and I said "No, I didn't know Baylor had a seminary." A week later, I received a call from the assistant dean of George W. Truett Theological Seminary on the campus of Baylor University, who arranged for me and my wife to visit the Truett campus. At the end of our visit, I was offered a full scholarship. Professionally, my heart was pulled in two different directions. I experienced great success as a football coach. However, there was not an ounce of doubt in my mind that God was calling me into full-time ministry, which meant my football coaching career would soon end. Therefore, I accepted the scholarship offer to attend Truett.

That decision caused me to experience excitement and fear because it required me to move from Fort Lauderdale to Waco, Texas. I had a wife and two young sons, and my wife had a lot of questions. How are we going to pay our bills? How are we going to pay rent? What are we going to do about health insurance? Two years earlier my wife was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. She always supported my work as a minister and football coach. However, she was not on board with us quitting our jobs and moving to Texas, neither were our parents.

The situation surrounding our moving got so bad that my wife's mother stopped speaking to me, and my mother recruited everyone she could find to talk me out of moving my family to Texas. One evening after my wife finished asking me twenty questions that I could not answer, I called my pastor and shared with him the level of tension my decision to move to Texas caused. He said, "Vernon, do you believe this is what God is calling you to do?" and I said, "Yes sir." Then he said, "Then you've got to

trust God." After we finished the conversation, I went into the bedroom and told my wife "We're going to have to trust God without having all the answers to our questions."

It took three days to reach Waco and when we arrived, it seemed like every negative force in the universe came against me. When we pulled up to the apartment I rented online, it was not what I expected. The first words out of my wife's mouth were "You have brought your family to the projects." I failed to know what to say, so I dropped my head, said a quick prayer to myself, and kept my mouth closed. My wife and kids always lived in a nice community, so this was a shocking experience for them. The balance of our time in Waco was turbulent including challenges with the children's schools, paying bills from month to month, an infested apartment complex, and health concerns for my wife, all of which created a distressed academic environment. After my first year of seminary, my faith in God was transformed. I have many stories of how God moved mightily during my three years at Truett Seminary. In 2004, I graduated from George W. Truett Theological Seminary and returned to Fort Lauderdale, where I served as the Executive Pastor for thirteen years at my home church.

Historical Description of The River Church

In December 2017, my son Ryan Shazier, a pro-bowl middle linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers, was severely injured during a Monday night football game. For the next several months, I traveled from my son's hospital room in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to southern Florida to preach on Sunday mornings. Then, I circled back to Pittsburgh on Sunday evenings to be with my family. Realizing I could no longer handle my administrative responsibilities, I resigned from Mount Bethel Ministries in 2018. During

the next month, God directed me to launch a church on Florida's Treasure Coast. God challenged me to build a place of worship that leads the community into a healthy and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. River of Life Fellowship, Inc., (The River) was founded on April 1, 2018, with a small number of faithful believers.

Geographic Description

I chose my hometown of Fort Pierce to launch The River. Fort Pierce, also known as the Sunrise City, has a small-town ambiance while offering the amenities of a seacoast city. For example, "Fort Pierce is a part of the Treasure Coast, which stretches along Florida's Atlantic coast from St. Lucie inlet to Sebastian inlet. It serves as the county seat of St. Lucie County. Natural and artificial reefs provide excellent fishing and diving opportunities."[1]

> The Port of Fort Pierce is one of Florida's 14 deepwater ports, set to be a hub for mega yacht repair and retrofit operations (MRO) and operated by Derecktor Shipyards. The Treasure Coast International Airport (TCIA) is on track to be a thriving aviation MRO. The customs experience is ranked # 1 by private pilots…Throughout the city of Fort Pierce, parks have been enhanced and improved, including Moore's Creek and Inlet Linear Parks, Causeway, South Beach, and Jetty Parks, Maravilla Park (including a dog park), and Dreamland and Pioneers Parks…The Sunrise Theatre, a 1200 seat performing arts venue, brings culture and entertainment. The Highwaymen Heritage Trail features 26 African American speed-painters of Florida landscapes who sold their art from their vehicles along the highways of South Florida. The Zora Neale Hurston Dust Tracks Trail commemorates the noted author and anthropologist who lived her last years in Fort Pierce. Recently, the city acquired historic school property, Means Court, now a center for neighborhood improvement.[2]

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[1] "Microsoft Bing Travel – Fort Pierce," Microsoft Bing, https://www.bing.com/travel/place-information?q=Fort%20Pierce&SID=ea7482a0-b339-a7f1-d8b3-f338a64ea126&form=PLACAB.

[2] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

Fort Pierce has several museums and several things about the city are noteworthy. For example:

> A new Highwaymen Museum has been identified, along with continued support of the Lincoln Theatre restoration. Other museums include the A, E. "Beanie" Backus Museum and Gallery and the St. Lucie Regional History Museum, with its satellite Adams Cobb Cultural Museum in the P.P. Cobb Building…A popular tourist attraction, the National UDT Navy SEAL Museum, commemorates the birth of the Navy combat divers here in Fort Pierce and chronicles the evolution of this military unit to today's Navy SEALs. Nearby Port St. Lucie is the Spring Training home of the New York Mets. Private and public golf courses are plentiful, including the world-renowned PGA courses in Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie County's Fairwinds Golf Course and Indian Hills.[3]

The Florida League of Cities awarded Fort Pierce the 2005 City of Excellence Award for overall excellence in city government. Also noteworthy is that:

> In 2011, Main Street Fort Pierce, Inc. received the Great American Main Street Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in beautiful downtown Fort Pierce…In 2015, Fort Pierce's downtown Main Street was named No. 1 on a consumer-advocacy group's "50 Best Small-Town Main Streets" list in America. The honor was given by Top Value Reviews, which ranked Fort Pierce top among cities with a population of 60,000. Fort Pierce was one of only two Florida cities named, beating out notable quaint small towns such as Nantucket, Mass., and Steamboat Springs, Colo.[4]

Demographic Description

Although St. Lucie is a conservative county, Fort Pierce is a liberal municipality. The population of the community our church serves is approximately 236,000, and the demographics that follow include data about age, relationships, families, languages, and income.

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[3] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

[4] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

Statistics

	Vero Beach	Port St. Lucie	Fort Pierce
Population	16,070	175,625	43,883
Median Age	54.10	41.1	37
Male/Female ratio	.09:1	1:1	.09:1
Married	53%	57%	46%
Families with kids under 18	22%	40%	44%
Speak English	90%	76%	72%
Speak Spanish	8%[5]	16%[6]	20%[7]

Table 1. The statistical, demographic information provided was obtained from AreaVibes, Inc.

Race

	Vero Beach	Port St Lucie	Fort Pierce
White	91.11%	74.34%	56.88%
Black	4.62%	17.59%	37.78%
Asian	1.02%	2.29%	.58%
Native American	.89%	.04%	.09%

[5] Area Vibes, "Vero Beach, FL Demographics," https://www.areavibes.com/vero+beach-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Vero%20Beach%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic%20,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

[6] Area Vibes, "Port St. Lucie, FL Demographics," https://www.areavibes.com/port+st.+lucie-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Port%20St.%20Lucie%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

[7] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

Other	2.35%[8]	5.44%[9]	4.67%[10]

Table 2. The race demographics information was taken from AreaVibes, Inc.

Vero Beach Household Income Distribution[11]

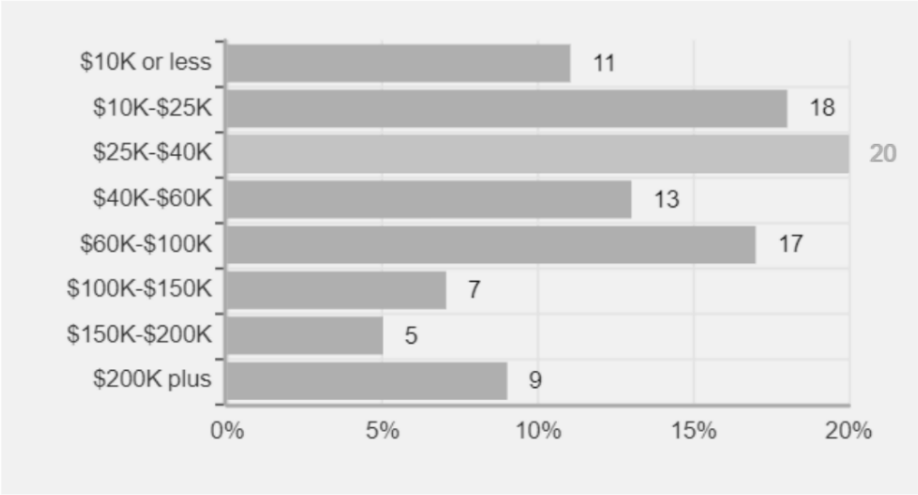

Figure 1. Vero Beach Household Income

[8] Area Vibes, "Vero Beach, FL Demographics," AreaVibes, https://www.areavibes.com/vero+beach-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Vero%20Beach%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic%20,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

[9] Area Vibes, "Port St. Lucie, FL Demographics," AreaVibes, https://www.areavibes.com/port+st.+lucie-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Port%20St.%20Lucie%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

[10] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

[11] Area Vibes, "Vero Beach, FL Demographics," Area Vibes, https://www.areavibes.com/vero+beach-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Vero%20Beach%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic%20,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

Fort Pierce Household Income Distribution[12]

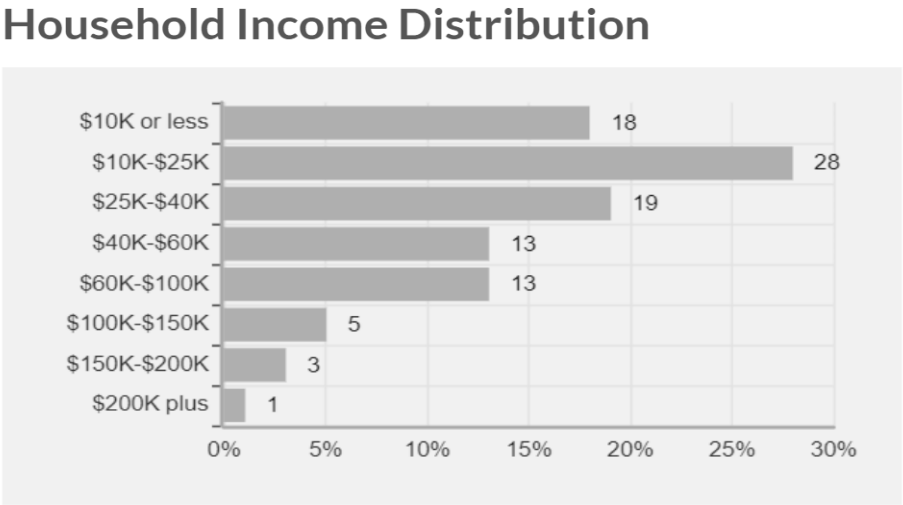

Figure 2. Fort Pierce Annual Household Income

Port St. Lucie Household Income Distribution[13]

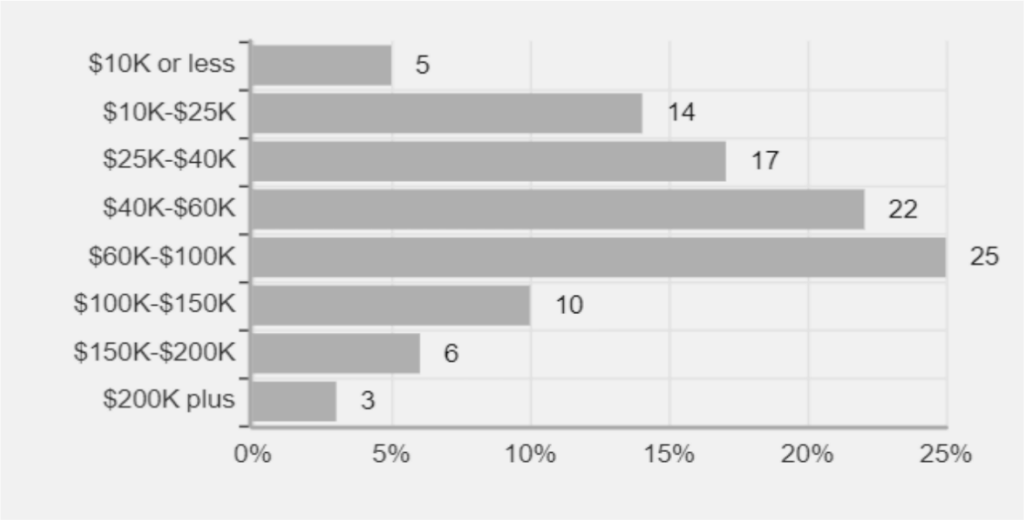

Figure 3. Port St Lucie Annual Household Income

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[12] City of Fort Pierce, "About Fort Pierce," Fort Pierce Florida, https://www.cityoffortpierce.com/224/About-Fort-Pierce.

[13] Area Vibes, "Port St. Lucie, FL Demographics," AreaVibes, https://www.areavibes.com/port+st.+lucie-fl/demographics/#:~:text=Port%20St.%20Lucie%2C%20FL%20Demographics%20%20%20Statistic,%20%201.0%3A1%20%204%20more%20rows%20.

The Treasure Coast boasts thirty-one elementary schools, five high schools, six magnet schools, a university, and several satellite campuses. In fact, "There are 107 churches in Fort Pierce representing 32 denominations."[14] With only an area of 20.7 square miles, some perhaps viewed building a church in Fort Pierce as ill-considered. However, I still envisioned the potential to impact the community. God showed me the ideal place to build a church with its diversity, county seat, rich history, economic growth, enhanced parks, golf courses, museums, and other tourist attractions. I had a location, a vision, and a mission but was immediately faced with many administrative challenges. Where would we hold worship services? How would we get both starting and operating capital? What did we want our organizational chart to look like? As the CEO and CFO of The River, I carried a heavy burden.

The Beginning

Initially, The River rented a magnet school auditorium, which generated numerous trials. We were only permitted to hold services on Sunday mornings, with no weekly Bible Study and church meetings. We had to ensure that our audio equipment, including speakers, monitors, microphones, musical instruments, and amplifiers, was set up and broken down each Sunday. We required space for new members' classes and the choir to conduct pre-service meetings. Our finance team required a secure space to manage weekly contributions. Our children's church and youth ministry required space separate from the worship auditorium. We also required office space to operate our

[14] Faith Street, "Churches in Fort Pierce Florida," Faith Street, https://www.faithstreet.com/fort-pierce-fl.

administrative functions. Before leaving the school each week, there needed to be no evidence of our worship service.

To overcome our challenges, ministry leaders arrived hours before service to ensure that everything was set up and remained after service to ensure everything was broken down and the space cleaned. We asked the magnet school for additional space. The school permitted us to use the school's cafeteria to accommodate our children and youth and a small classroom to conduct new members' classes. We utilized modest dressing rooms behind the auditorium's stage for pre-service meetings, as a pastor's study, and for our finance department. We rented office space in another area of Fort Pierce for our administration and rented storage units for our equipment. Although it limited my ability to put ministries in place, we made the best of the situation. Things operated smoothly, and we slowly began to grow. Then, an unforeseen setback struck us.

A little more than one year into our existence and without notice, the magnet school chose not to renew our contract, immediately thrusting The River back to the starting point. After a quick yet exhaustive search, we temporarily relocated to a local high school on the other side of town, which carried similar challenges to the magnet school. I knew The River needed its own building space to survive.

During that period, a group of investors gifted The River with a parcel of land (sixteen acres) suitable to build a facility. This site was easily assessable as it is on the second most traveled roadway in Fort Pierce. We created a capital campaign, thereby raising money for building costs, and planned to break ground in 2020. Nevertheless, The River needed a temporary place to worship until we completed the building.

Two months later, God directed us to a vacant, neglected church in Fort Pierce that needed renters. With the help and favor of God, we secured an agreement and relocated to our current building. This move was our third in a little more than one year, resulting in members growing uncertain of our future and my vision. I knew the plans God had for The River and me. As I sat on my porch one evening, God gave me our identity!

Present Ministry

At that moment, it was time for the members of The River to discover its identity. Once again, I utilized my success on the gridiron as a football coach and leadership coach and paralleled that into the ministry. I needed to employ a well-thought-out and fundamental approach. I also paralleled our organizational chart to that of a football team. For instance, I positioned coordinators and coaches instead of leaders. I labeled our small groups, as huddles. At the end of every service, I challenged The River to act like champions, champions come to church and go to work on time. Champions give their customers their very best service. Champions find at least one person to complement each day. I taught them that our focus summed up with our three coins: discipleship, community, and five-star.

The two components that comprise our discipleship coin were to be disciples and disciple-makers. Being a disciple entails attending Sunday worship, participating in weekly Bible huddles, studying the Bible daily, and praying. Being a disciple maker means understanding and embracing the Great Commission Jesus teaches in the Gospel of Matthew. Our church aligns with the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20 states:

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt. 28:18-20 NIV).[15]

The community coin sets our discipleship call into action. For example, The River has quarterly Champion Weekend community events where members volunteer to serve in the community. Champion Weekends consist of conducting take-overs at local eating establishments and car washes where the church donates towards patrons' purchases while sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and praying with those who desire prayer. These weekends also consist of partnering with St. Lucie County Health Department where The River coordinated two COVID-19 vaccination clinics and served more than 1,000 citizens while sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and praying for those who desired prayer.

In addition, Champion Weekends has an Annual Baccalaureate Program where The River raises more than $10,000 annually and purchases essentials for college-bound high school seniors in the Treasure Coast community. It hosts periodic Community Park and prayer events and hosts the community prayer caravan where churches in the Treasure Coast caravan through the streets of Fort Pierce (escorted by St. Lucie County Sheriff's Department) while praying for local businesses, schools, government officials, homes, and families. Events on these weekends also include hosting two gospel concerts where world-renowned recording artists perform. Lastly, these weekends involve partnering with St. Lucie County Agriculture and Labor Program, Inc., and assisting with paying utility bills for at-risk families, while sharing the good news of Jesus.

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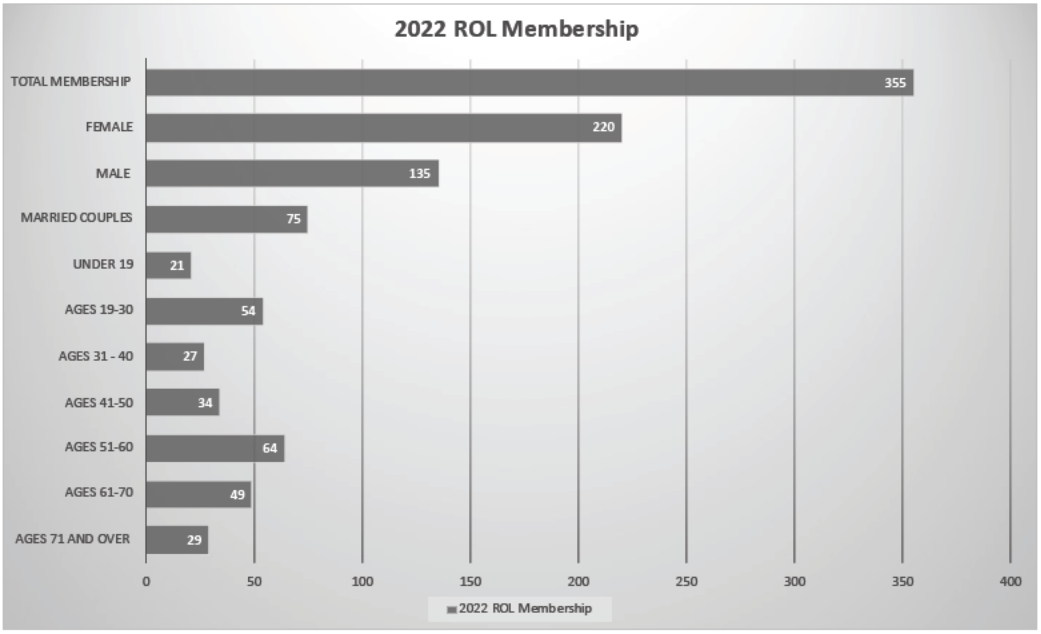
[15] All biblical citations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise stated, Matthew 28:18-20.

Our last coin is the five-star coin. As a church consultant in leadership, I often found churches in what I like to refer to as church hospice, because leadership ministers to their generation only, neglecting younger generations. At the River, we are intentional about discipleship five generations in a five-star fashion.

River of Life Fellowship Membership Demographics (2022)

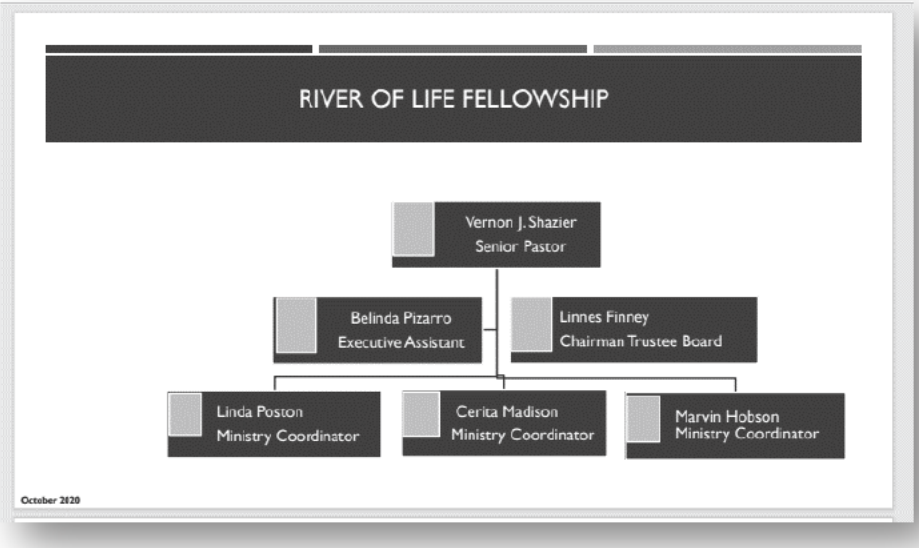


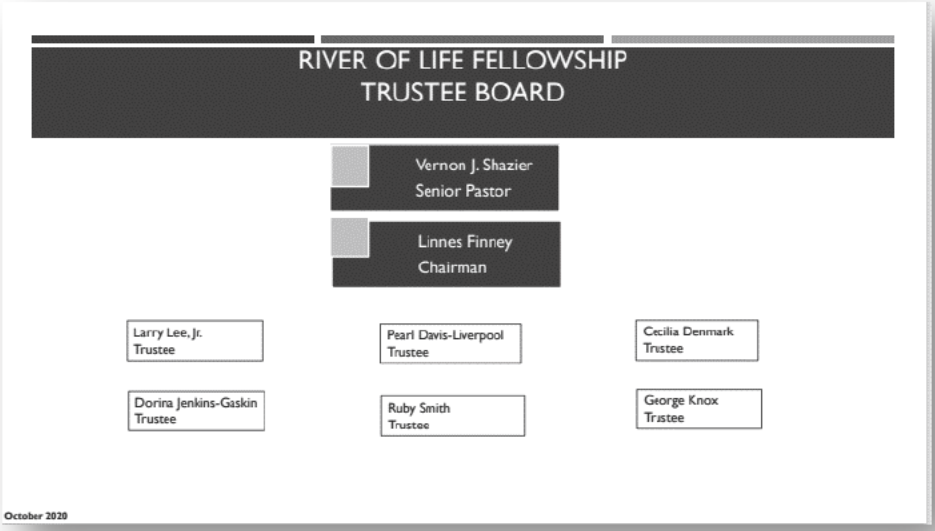
Note: Age demo covers 278 total members. It does not include the younger children or those who did not provide birth information.

River of Life Fellowship Organization

The River now had its identity, so my next challenge was setting up The River's organization chart, focusing on leadership (see Figure 4). To ensure The River operates in the will of God, we hold several meetings, trainings, and events for several groups. This includes staff (weekly), coaches (monthly), small groups (weekly), creative arts (weekly), Trustees Board (monthly), gatherings (quarterly), and Champion Weekend (quarterly

community outreach). These sessions are also for the Discipleship Institute (quarterly), leadership training (semi-annually), the Breast Cancer Walk (annually), and the elementary school mentor program (weekly).





RIVER OF LIFE FELLOWSHIP
MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

LINDA POSTON
MINISTRY COORDINATOR

Vernon & Shawn Shazier - Coaches
Couples Ministry (Yoke)

Shawn Shazier - Coach
Women's Ministry (Bold & Beautiful)

Ken Emanuel - Coach
Men's Ministry (Frontline)

Dameta Applewhite – Coach
Discipleship Institute

TBD – Coach
Huddles
- Bible Huddles
- Chew & Chat
- Bowling
- Aqua Fitness
- Cardio Line Dancing

October 2020

RIVER OF LIFE FELLOWSHIP
MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

CERITA MADISON
MINISTRY COORDINATOR

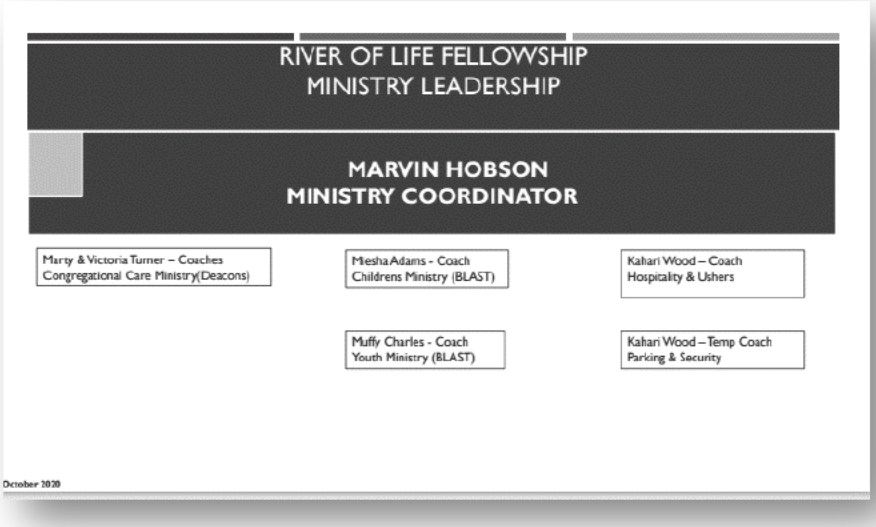
Trayon Gaskins - Coach
Worship & Arts

Lezley George - Coach
Marketing & Media

Genny Carter - Coach
Outreach Ministry

KeAndrea Davis - Coach
Millennial Ministry

October 2020



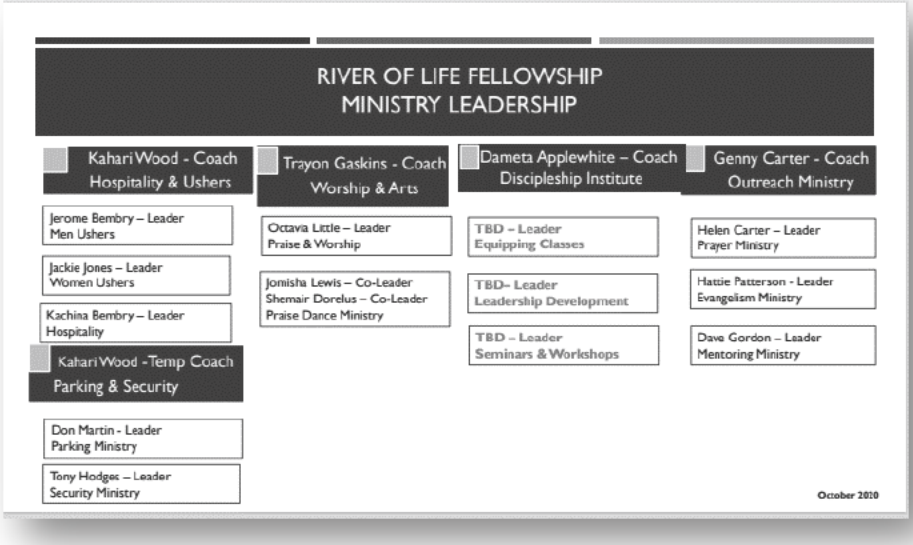


Figure 4. River of Life Fellowship Org Chart (10/20)

Areas of Concern

The church has several areas of concern including low in-worship attendance (people rely on streaming and social media) and losing leadership (strong leaders relocated to other communities). The church has concerns regarding very small children

and youth attendance as well as non-functioning or inactive Millennials. The church must also deal with closing performance gaps and filling vacant leadership positions.

Synergy

In evaluating the chosen path provided by God, my formative years and current context consisted of orchestrated synergy by the hand of God. It is no surprise that my early years consisted of traumatic experiences. Watching my parents fight and the secret desire to kill my father are all relative to the need to have a remedy in place to mitigate traumatic experiences. Although the desire to retaliate violence with violence, that was not the plan that God had for my life. Providentially, God knew that I could assist others with creating ways to manage trauma and did not allow me to fulfill the premeditated plan to take his life. Instead, God removed my father from the equation.

The challenges with the church plant were expected but did not yield a traumatic experience. However, when the traumatic experience of Ryan's injury occurred, it left me drained, shattered, void, and darting between two opinions of cursing God and asking for forgiveness from God. The struggle of trauma was real, and just as my son Ryan was contemplating suicidal moments, secretly, so was I. Eventually, I shifted to a place of what I call my "God Moments," and I learned to trust God. The shift of trusting God occurred because I began to embrace my "God Thoughts," which was a deep reflection of the attributes of God. Focusing on God helped me to manage my anxiety, depression, and negative feelings.

The reality is when people experience the intensity of traumatic pain, it appears to be unbearable. Not only for the victim but also for the secondary trauma victims. My

wife, Ryan's fiancé, and I were all secondary trauma victims. We did not go through the trauma; however, it impacted our lives, nonetheless. Therefore, I believe that God allowed me to experience Ryan's traumatic experience and to also be a secondary trauma victim. The reality is that we still struggle with the trauma even though Ryan has a normal life and has moved on. The struggle of trauma will be a part of our plight for the rest of our lives. However, it is not in vain. My family and I have been positioned to help other individuals as they experience trauma. It is my calling to help individuals understand that if they possess high theological thoughts about God during traumatic experiences, then they have a strong chance of managing their traumatic situation.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The struggle with traumatic experiences is a real challenge. I learned this firsthand as the father of an NFL player, Ryan Shazier who was injured while playing the sport. The victim is not the only one who struggles, others suffer from secondary trauma as well. Although Saul instigated trauma for David, secondary trauma can cause negative emotional pathology.[1] According to C. S. Lewis, human history "is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror, with just sufficient happiness interposed to give them (the victim), while it lasts, an agonized apprehension of losing it, and, when it is lost, the poignant misery of remembering."[2]

"Trauma is an emotional response that is caused by experiencing a single incident or a series of distressing or traumatic emotional or psychological events, or both."[3] Secondary traumatic stress is "the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another."[4] Another aspect of trauma is defined by physical injury, psychological injury, social injury, historical injury, ongoing injury,

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[1] Charles Figley and Kathleen Figley, "Stemming the Tide of Trauma Systemically: The Role of Family Therapy," *The Australian and New Zealand and Journal of Family Therapy* 30, no. 3 (2009): 173-174.

[2] C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1962), 14.

[3] American Psychological Association, "Trauma," https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma.

[4] "Secondary Traumatic Stress," The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress.

and secondary injury.[5] Additionally, profound traumatic injuries can create immediate and long-term, up to two generations, of negative impact on the person, family, community, and society.[6]

The greatest challenge with trauma is the pain and suffering it causes. Humanity struggles with the seeming injustice that goes along with suffering and pain. Many blame God for allowing traumatic experiences to occur and often question how a God of justice can permit such traumatic experiences. Lewis states, "If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both. This is the problem of pain in its simplest form."[7]

When learning to embrace the struggle as a secondary trauma stress victim, I turned to the Bible to gain insight regarding the ways to manage the emotional traumatic challenge. It was relevant to search the scriptures because people are often challenged to believe that God is operating and functioning during their traumatic experiences. During the biblical search, several biblical characters were identified as individuals who had endured traumatic experiences.

For example, Noah was instructed to build an ark by God. After walking in obedience, Noah experienced the destruction of the world (Gen. chapters 6-8). Moses, on the other hand, commits murder, becomes a fugitive, wanders in the desert, and eventually becomes God's mouthpiece to inform Pharoah to release the Israelites from

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[5] Judith Wise, *Trauma Transformed: An Empowerment Response* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3-4.

[6] Ragnhild Dybdahl, *Psychological Interventions in Times of Crisis* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2006), 134.

[7] Lewis, *The Problem of Pain,* 26.

bondage. As a result of the call to lead the children out of Egypt, Moses experiences natural disasters that were orchestrated by God. Moses witnessed plaques and the death of male Egyptian children. All of which was increasingly traumatic. Daniel was tossed in the lion's den and the three Hebrew boys were tossed into a fiery furnace. Both groups of men were spared by the hands of God through these traumatic experiences.

The challenge with trauma is that it produces pain and suffering. As Christians, we often struggle with the fact that a good God will permit such traumatic experiences to pierce and alter our lives. In true godly fashion, if we search deep enough, we will find that even in trauma, pain, and suffering, God continues to be a loving Father who provides opportunities to witness God's sovereignty, even in unimaginable places such as pain and suffering. The research seeks to ponder the hypothesis that if individuals possess high theological thoughts about God, then they have a strong chance of effectively managing traumatic experiences. The biblical character that will be used to research trauma is Joseph, the son of Jacob.

Historical Overview

In searching the scriptures, Genesis 50:15-21 sheds appropriate light on addressing trauma on both the primary and secondary levels. Genesis 50:15-21 states:

> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be

> afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.[8]

The Genesis passage of Joseph is a familiar biblical story. Most Christians can rehearse the story of Joseph. Many Christians learned of Joseph in Sunday School as the lad with the coat of many colors was despised by his brothers because of the favor shown by their father, Jacob. Joseph shared a dream that indicated his brothers would one day bow down to him, which infuriated them. The hatred was deeply rooted in the hearts of Joseph's brothers, and the hatred quickly sprang into action. The brothers chose to sell Joseph into slavery to a passing Ishmaelite caravan instead of taking his life. The Ishmaelites then sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt in the house of Potiphar.[9]

The favor of the Lord continued to rest on Joseph in Egypt, and he found favor with Potiphar until he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. This accusation landed Joseph in prison, but favor continued to follow him. With the help of the Lord, Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners. The news of his ability to interpret dreams got back to Pharaoh and Joseph was invited to interpret the dream of Pharaoh. With the successful interpretation given to Pharaoh, Joseph was released from prison and promoted to the chief administrator of Egypt. Throughout the years that Joseph was in Egypt, his father, Jacob mourned the loss of his son because Joseph's brothers presented his coat covered in blood to their father, which led Jacob to believe that his son was dead.[10]

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[8] Biblical citations are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated, Genesis 50:15-21.

[9] Yehuda Altein, "The Story of Joseph in the Bible," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/143035/jewish/The-Story-of-Joseph-in-the-Bible.htm.

[10] Yehuda Altein, "The Story of Joseph in the Bible," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/143035/jewish/The-Story-of-Joseph-in-the-Bible.htm.

As chief administrator, Egypt began to experience seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, which was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream given by Joseph. During the seven years of plenty, Joseph stored up grain to ensure there would be plenty of grain when the famine hit the land. During the seven years of famine, Joseph's brothers heard there was grain in Egypt and journeyed there to purchase grain for survival. Joseph's brothers did not recognize Joseph. However, Joseph recognized his brothers. He put them through a series of tests to determine their sincerity toward his maternal brother, Benjamin. Upon realizing that his brothers were loyal to Benjamin, Joseph identified himself. The sibling rivalry came to an end because Joseph forgave his brothers and learned to cope with the trauma in his life.[11]

In evaluating the text of Genesis 50:15-21, it validates trauma as well as provides an example of how Christians are expected to manage traumatic experiences. The text spells out the fact that trauma existed among Joseph and his brothers. The possibility of Joseph holding a grudge is a representation of trauma. The fact that the brothers were fearful of Joseph's possible reactions is also an indication of trauma. Joseph's brothers were traumatized by the fact that Joseph could have sought revenge on them if he operated in a negative space because of the wrongs they had inflicted on Joseph. However, Joseph chose to love his brothers. Despite the fear of Joseph's brothers, Joseph did not negate the fact that God was a forgiving and merciful God. Due to Joseph's relationship with the Lord, he was able to forgive and extend love to his brothers.

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[11] Yehuda Altein, "The Story of Joseph in the Bible," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/143035/jewish/The-Story-of-Joseph-in-the-Bible.htm.

Community Trauma

Many traumatic experiences occur throughout the biblical story of Joseph, which creates a community of trauma. Initially, Joseph experienced trauma because he was sold into slavery by his brothers and alienated from his family. Joseph's brothers experienced trauma because of the untruth they shared with their father about their brother Joseph. Jacob was traumatized because of the loss of Joseph and the presumption of his death. Trauma continues for Joseph once he is sold again to Potiphar and falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. Being imprisoned and denied caused Joseph to experience trauma as well. Once Joseph's brothers and father realized that he was not dead that created another level of trauma because they did not know how Joseph would respond.

Exegetical Review

When evaluating the text of Genesis 50:15-21, it is obvious that trauma was a part of the story. Everyone in the text experienced trauma on some level. Trauma and secondary trauma were present in the biblical text. Within the text, the first indication of trauma is the word grudge. The brothers were fearful that Joseph would hold a grudge against them for the wrongs they had extended to him over the years. The fear was deeply rooted in the fact that their father, Jacob, was dead and was no longer capable of keeping the peace. Throughout the text, several themes are presented including trauma, grudge, forgiveness, coping, ability to manage trauma, trusting in God, and loyalty. As we delve into each of these themes sub-themes are presented to include the providence of God, fear, and suffering.

Grudge

The word grudge could be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is emphatic, which makes a definitive statement. Joseph has a grudge against his brothers. The second interpretation possibly means Joseph has a grudge against his brothers. The commonality between the two interpretations is that the brothers continue to fear the consequences of their actions. It appears to be inconceivable that Joseph would forgive his brothers for their actions. Further, it is not indicated in the text that Joseph explicitly provides a statement of forgiveness. Additionally, their guilt influences their thought process and the fact that they are suffering from trauma. Their guilt also brings an open confession of the wrongs committed against Joseph. The language used implies that Joseph may pay them back, which is also an indication of inflicted trauma on Joseph and the second trauma experienced by the brothers.[12] The fear that the brothers possessed is an indication that they were still dealing with trauma. According to James Waltner, "Fear is the common reaction in the face of insecurity and whatever threatens life. However, the psalmist is not overcome by fear; instead, he overcomes his fear by trust in God. Trust in God robs fear of its quality of terror."[13]

The final confession that the brothers reflect upon to indicate a possible grudge is the admitting "all the wrongs we did to him" "translates the word gāmal, meaning what one "deals out" requires appropriate recompense, whether for good or evil behavior (vv. 15, 17)."[14] Most likely, the brothers were too frightened to face Jacob. Therefore, they

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[12] K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2005), 924–927.

[13] James H. Waltner, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Psalms* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 280.

[14] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 924.

"sent word" that "your father" and not "our father" brings to the forefront "Joseph's obligation as a son, not as a brother."[15] Verses seventeen has two voices: the postmortem voice of Jacob and the appeal of the brothers.

> The former gives the basis for the latter's request and provides incentive for Joseph to respond favorably. Their plea essentially imitates the words of their father's message: lit., "I beg you [Joseph], please forgive the transgressions of your brothers" and "Now, please forgive the transgressions of the servants of the God of your father." The message begins with the interjection of entreaty, ʾānnāʾ, "please" or "I beg" (absent NIV; e.g., see the exclamation at Exod 32:31; 2 Kgs 20:3), followed in the Hebrew text by the request "forgive!" (imper. śāʾ, meaning "bear away, lift," indicating "forgiveness"; e.g., Exod 32:32).[16]

The quest for forgiveness is an indication of sins, which translates to the noun peša and generally means offense. The brothers committed a breach in their relationship with Joseph as siblings. History seems to repeat itself because "sins" and "wrongs" occurred in Jacob's story when Laban tricked him regarding the marriage of Rachel and Leah. However, in Joseph's story, the brothers willingly acknowledge their mistreatment of Joseph in hopes of forgiveness.[17] The uncertainty of Joseph's response caused his brothers to fear. The fear that Joseph held a grudge was not irrational. Therefore, fear became a secondary traumatic experience for Joseph's brothers. The brothers feared Joseph's retaliation. Furthermore, Joseph was positioned to retaliate against his brothers if he chose not to forgive them for their deeds. "For him to retaliate against his brothers would be to undercut the gracious ends of preserving Joseph, for Joseph's sojourn was

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[15] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 924.

[16] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 925.

[17] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 925.

"to save [their] lives by a great deliverance" (45:7) and "the saving of many lives" (50:20)."[18]

The word badly occurs three times in verses fifteen, seventeen, and twenty, which means "harm, abusive." The word refers to the beginning when Joseph submitted a "bad report (37:2). The act of asking Joseph to forgive is an indication that Jacob understood the traumatic experience that Joseph had suffered. "Thus, if they are to have reconciliation, Joseph's absolution is required since they have no excuse."[19] In addition to Jacob's plea from the grave, the brothers add their emotional plea for forgiveness. "They astutely emend the message of Jacob, referring to themselves as "the servants of the God of your father" (v. 17b). This recognition of the deity echoes 46:3 ("I am the God, the God of your father") when the Lord promises to make of Jacob a "great nation" (cf. 12:2; 26:24; 28:13–14; Exod 3:6; Deut 26:5)."[20] By doing so, the brothers hope to take advantage of Joseph's loyalty to Jacob and the God that Jacob had faithfully served.

Additionally, the brothers admitted to the committed crimes and humbled themselves, showcased servant-like attitudes, and showed remorse for the crimes committed. These actions cause Joseph to weep. Joseph's tears were an indication of a broken heart, which brought forth the realization that their estrangement was not yet fully healed. All of which left a series of questions: "Why did his father not trust him? Why did the brothers still fear him?"[21]

> The text again echoes the fractious past by the remark, "When their message came …" (bĕdabbĕrām, v. 17b), recalling when in seething anger at young Joseph "they

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[18] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 921.

[19] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 924.

[20] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 924.

[21] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 927.

> could not speak [dabbĕrô] a kind word to him" (37:4b). Verse 18 describes the brothers' contrition who, after the messengers, enter the scene casting themselves at Joseph's feet ("threw themselves down before him") and volunteer their servitude.[22]

This episode reflects the arrest scene when the brother conceded that they were the Egyptian lord's slaves. Additionally, it reflects the dream of young Joseph. However, despite the uncertainty of the outcome, the actions and content lead the reader to reflect on the providence of God in the life of God's chosen people.[23]

Forgiveness

"The eminent fourth-century Christian poet, Ephrem the Syrian, commented on Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers and his acceptance of God's will for his life (50:20). Joseph wept and said, 'Do not be afraid of me, for although your father has died, the God of your father, on account of whom I will never strike you, is still alive.'"[24] Joseph's forgiveness was a direct reflection of his relationship with God. The concept of forgiveness was not foreign because, in Genesis 39:9, Joseph displayed the same principle as it relates to Potiphar's wife.

In verses nineteen and twenty, Joseph's response "But Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." The statement of Joseph reflects his theology. Joseph understood that God does not always provide a

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[22] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 927.

[23] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 927.

[24] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 921.

painted picture, so we know what to expect. Instead, God provides small fragments. Joseph's statement confirms his belief that God is in control of history.[25]

Joseph continues by pointing out that he is not God. Joseph did not have the authority or capacity to act in a godly manner. Further, Joseph understood that divine purpose would not permit him to react in a personal vengeful manner. Joseph took the position that vengeance belongs to the Lord. Joseph's mature relationship with God allows him to explain that the intentions may have been meant for evil, but God transformed the evil intentions into good. As a result of the transformation, many people were delivered and saved. Therefore, being angry and seeking vengeance against his brothers would have been out of his character.[26]

> His opening words create a parallelism, which heightens the contrast between human and divine intentions, lit., "You yourselves intended against me harm [rāʿâ]//God intended it for good [lĕṭōbâ]." The nature of their "intended" (ḥāšab) harm is well illustrated by Saul's "plan" (ḥāšab) to murder David (1 Sam 18:25b). Joseph supports his reasoning by pointing to the many peoples that Egypt's storehouses have sustained ("what is now," kayyōm hazzeh; cf., e.g., Deut 2:30; 1 Sam 22:8). The "good/evil" motif that recurs throughout Genesis (see Introduction) fittingly makes its last appearance in Joseph's humble interpretation of his troubles.[27]

The traumatic experiences that Joseph endured while in Egypt could be viewed as God's handiwork. Some scholars suggest the assigned task to Joseph's hands was too great for him to accomplish alone. Therefore, God orchestrated challenging situations which led him from the pit to the palace. As Christians, we must understand and embrace the notion that evil yields to the purposes of God. The purpose of God is indicated because many

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[25] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 927.

[26] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 927.

[27] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 928.

lives were saved. It also highlights the fact that Joseph was fulfilling the purpose of his life by saving lives. The span of saving lives was not only limited to the Egyptians. The sentiments of saving lives were also captured in Genesis 45:7.[28]

The blessing in forgiveness is that it goes both ways when someone has been wronged. The person who has been wronged is empowered to forgive and make a theological stance by affirming the one who did the wrong. If the sufferer can witness a divine purpose in their suffering that is an indication of forgiveness. However, one should not automatically explain away another person's suffering.[29]

Coping

When a person manages trauma, they transition from a place of traumatic anger, stress, and frustration into a place of forgiveness and the ability to cope with the trauma. Often, people are challenged to suffer from unwarranted traumatic experiences, which makes them angry. People want a cause for the trauma they are experiencing and seek to place the blame on Satan, sin, luck, and or fate. To cope with trauma, people need to permit themselves to vent to God and give God their anger and rage. Doing so will allow their spirit to heal and to further establish and embrace a close relationship with Jesus.[30]

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[28] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 928.

[29] Cameron B. R. Howard, "Commentary on Genesis 50:15-21," Working Preacher, https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-24/commentary-on-genesis-5015-21-5.

[30] Eugene Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Ruth, Jonah*, *Esther* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 42.

Joseph transitioned to coping by speaking kindly. The brothers transitioned to coping by their actions of casting down. This action showed the ultimate fulfillment of Joseph's dream. However, Joseph did not take advantage of his brothers even though he held the second-highest position in Egypt, he exercised self-control and resisted the opportunity to reign over his brothers. The action of Joseph is an indication that he was healed from the traumatic experiences that were inflicted upon him by his brothers. The ability to cope with the trauma inflicted on his life allows Joseph to focus on the future.[31]

Another example of Joseph coping with the trauma is that he declares that even after the death of his father, he would not change the benevolence that he felt towards his brothers. The love that he has for his brothers is displayed by Joseph's calmness and calm demeanor. Joseph is saying that the death of his father will not change his benevolence toward them. He is reassuring and comforting, and the Bible says he "spoke kindly."[32]

Joseph was in a coping mentality because he allowed God to right the wrongs. Instead of malice and hatred, Joseph showed his brothers favor by forgiveness and practical affection. These attitudes are reflective of the attributes of God, being a Christian, and being Christlike.[33]

Ability to Manage Trauma

Joseph could overcome the traumatic experiences because he forgave his brothers. Joseph shares this ability to overcome trauma with King David and Apostle Paul. Each of

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[31] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 923.

[32] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 927.

[33] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndall Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 235.

these biblical characters had a keen sense of their call and purpose, which helped them to overcome trauma. Additionally, suffering was viewed as a tool used by God to build godly character. Paul believed in the linkage of suffering and the message of the Gospel. He used his stories as teaching tools to help others build a strong relationship with Christ. Three themes in Paul's ministry speak to his ability to cope with tragedy, trusting in God, suffering, character building, and walking in the call.[34]

Paul encourages the church to identify with the sufferings of Christ, stay positive, and trust God's love to find well-being.[35] James Waltner further promotes the ability to manage by indicating that when God stands by a person's side, he or she can manage any traumatic experience.[36] The research of Tucker and Andrews also confirms that total reliance on God and prayers are necessary to cope with traumatic experiences.[37]

Trusting in God

In exegeting the text, it is obvious that Joseph and Paul had a lot in common as it relates to trauma and effectively managing trauma. There are many scriptures accredited to Paul that help us to understand the commonality between the two. Romans 8:28 helps us to understand with clarity Paul's stance on how to effectively deal with trauma. "And

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[34] James Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle* (New York, NY: T and T Clark, 1998), 496.

[35] J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, eds. Trevor Burke and Brian Rosner (New York, NY: T and T Clark International, 2011), 88-98.

[36] James H. Waltner, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Psalms* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 42.

[37] Ruth Tucker and Leslie Andrews, "Historical Notes on Missionary Care," in *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 25.

we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Paul dealt with trauma by trusting in God.

According to Sande, with each passing traumatic experience, Paul's trust in God was enhanced.[38] On multiple examples Paul was faced with adversity. On three different occasions, Paul pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn from his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). Even though Paul was informed that the thorn would not be removed, it did not shake his faith and trust in God. Instead, Paul faced trauma with perseverance and power. Further, Paul acknowledged that trauma could not be avoided, so he embraced it acknowledging that the suffering would do two things. The suffering would eventually reveal God's glory. And secondarily, it would refine Paul's character.[39] Paul felt trauma, pain, suffering, and anguish were a small price to pay for salvation.[40] It is interesting that Paul made no differentiation in his suffering, whether in ministry or personal. Ultimately, Paul trusted God.[41]

Other scholars agree that the salvation message carries the image of suffering, death, and the image of trauma.[42] Other scholars have expressed that only through pain

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[38] Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 67-68.

[39] Timothy Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager, *Caring for People God's Way: Personal and Emotional Issues, Addictions, Grief, and Trauma* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 404.

[40] Adewuya, *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, 90.

[41] Morna Hooker, "Interchange and Suffering," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament*, eds. William Horbury and Brian McNeil (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80.

[42] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 339.

and sorrow can the power and glory of God be discovered, and sanctification achieved.[43] Grassi further promotes the notion that non-believers witnessed how Christians managed trauma. They would also witness how Christ assisted the believer through each traumatic experience.[44]

Loyalty

Loyalty is a consistent theme that was also presented in the text. There was loyalty to Potiphar on Joseph's behalf. Although Potiphar imprisoned Joseph. Joseph was still willing to come back and serve under his leadership. Joseph was loyal to his father, Jacob, despite the traumatic experience that he learned to manage. More importantly, Joseph was loyal to God. Joseph does not retaliate against his brothers because of his commitment to the Lord God. If Joseph had retaliated against his brothers, it would have been an indication that he did not trust God. Joseph understood the assignment, which was "to save [their] lives by a great deliverance" (45:7) and "the saving of many lives" (50:20).[45]

Additionally, Joseph shows loyalty to the family, "he seeks to be returned to Canaan in accordance with the request of Jacob."[46] This demonstration of loyalty to the family further promotes his loyalty and covenant to God because Joseph understands that

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[43] Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 226.

[44] Joseph Grassi, *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2003), 106.

[45] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 921.

[46] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 922.

the family unit was instituted by God. This action further promotes the idea and concept of a healthy family unit for the future. It is a hopeful note that as a united family, they will be positioned to overcome future traumatic experiences. This unification of brothers is a stark contrast to brothers as it relates to the beginning of brotherhood in Genesis. Although the Genesis story ended in Abel's murder, these twelve sons "experienced divine grace that superseded the temptations of murder and vengeance that would have threatened the promissory blessing."[47]

In evaluating Joseph's story, it becomes clear that Joseph was comfortable in allowing God to right the wrongs in his life. Joseph did not seek revenge on his brothers but instead chose to love them with the love of the Lord. Joseph chose to repay evil with forgiveness and practical affection. These actions reflect an individual who has a close walk with God. This is displayed in verse twenty-one as Joseph promised more than personal philanthropy. Joseph encouraged them not to be afraid, which is an indication that he had forgiven them of their wrongdoings. He confirmed his forgiveness with a promise to provide for them and their children. Joseph's forgiveness expanded to multiple generations. Joseph's forgiveness was emphatically stated with reassurance and kind words.[48] All of this was confirmed because Joseph believed in the providential plan of the Lord God.

V. P. Hamilton's research further promotes this notion by indicating that "Joseph affirms bluntly his belief in the providential plan of God for his life. On one hand, the text states that the brothers 'sold' Joseph to a caravan heading to Egypt (37:28; 45:4–5),

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[47] Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26,* 922.

[48] Kinder, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, 235.

an action which they recognized as a sin (42:22; 50:17) and a wrong (50:15, 17). On the other hand, Joseph can say 'God sent me' (45:7), and 'God planned it for good' (50:20)."[49] Joseph acknowledged the human factor and the divine factor at work in his life. Ultimately, Joseph sees it is the "action of God within the destructive, sinful behaviour of the brothers as decisive."[50] Joseph's relationship with God keeps him centered during traumatic experiences. His relationship with God keeps him liberated from destructive behavior such as anger, resentment, and or bitterness.[51]

Economic Factor

When evaluating the text, it is important to consider the economic factor. Joseph, as the Chief Administrator of Egypt and the manager of grain, was seated in a great economic position. He could sell and trade due to the wisdom to effectively manage the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. Joseph's brothers, however, were not seated in a good economic position. They had to rely on others to ensure that food and supplies were provided, along with the rest of Egypt.

Based on the economic position of individuals in Egypt, they were heavily dependent on others for their well-being. The same holds for many in society. If you do not have proper health insurance coverage, you may be challenged to receive adequate professional healthcare. The same holds if you are injured and do not have adequate upgrades in your home to assist in navigating with a handicap, you are challenged to be

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[49] V. P. Hamilton, "Joseph," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 607.

[50] Hamilton, "Joseph," 607.

[51] Hamilton, "Joseph," 607.

effective in a standard quality of life, all of which can lead to a traumatic experience. Further, your caregiver may experience post-secondary trauma if they are unable to provide the necessary care that you need due to limited resources. Ultimately, if a person is not adequately equipped financially, it can further promote and enhance a person who is experiencing trauma. When researching the effects of trauma, the economic status should be included in the equation because if you are not financially stable the victim and secondary victim could be further traumatized. Fortunately, Joseph forgave his brothers and embraced them with the love of the Lord and their economic status was not relevant for them to receive goods.

Summary

The research in this biblical chapter discusses trauma primary and secondary. The biblical character of Joseph serves as the focal point of the research. However, Paul is also discussed because both biblical characters endured excessive amounts of stress. Joseph endured being sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned on trumped-up charges. Paul, on the other hand, was stoned, shipwrecked, bitten by a viper, imprisoned, and endured a thorn in his flesh. The greatest challenge with trauma is the pain and suffering it causes. Humanity struggles with the seeming injustice that goes along with suffering and pain. Many blame God for allowing traumatic experiences to occur and often question how a God of justice can permit such traumatic experiences to occur.

The work provides an overview of the life of Joseph that explains how he landed in Potiphar's house, was falsely accused, and was thrown in jail. Eventually, due to his ability to interpret dreams, he was promoted to the chief administrator of Egypt. Genesis

50:15-21 serves as the foundational scripture for the research. Romans 8:28 serves as the lateral text in the New Testament. Genesis 50:15-21 validates trauma as well as provides an example of how Christians are expected to manage traumatic experiences. The text spells out the fact that trauma existed among Joseph and his brothers. Many traumatic experiences occur throughout the biblical story of Joseph, which creates a community of trauma. Everyone in the text experienced trauma on some level. Within the text, the first indication of trauma is the word grudge. The brothers were fearful that Joseph would hold a grudge against them for the wrongs that they had extended to him over the years. The fear was deeply rooted in the fact that their father, Jacob, was dead and was no longer capable of keeping the peace. Throughout the text, several themes are presented including trauma, grudge, forgiveness, coping, ability to manage trauma, trusting in God, and loyalty. As we delve into each of these themes sub-themes are presented to include the providence of God, fear, and suffering. Ultimately, it becomes clear that Joseph was able to endure the traumatic experiences due to his strong relationship with God. Furthermore, his ability to forgive his brothers was also a reflection of his relationship with God. Joseph believed that God was the one who would right the wrongs. He believed that vengeance belonged to the Lord. And even though the plot was meant for bad, because of God's divine providence, God turned it around for the good of the family and many other people's lives. Joseph also understood and embraced the call that was on his life. Due to this belief, Joseph did not permit anger or bitterness to settle in. Instead, forgiveness was the order for the day.

It becomes clear in the text that Christians manage trauma by coping. Joseph managed trauma through forgiveness, reassurance, and speaking kindly to his brothers.

Paul understood his call and purpose, which helped him to deal with trauma. Paul provides a more in-depth methodology for dealing with trauma by adding the suffering component. Paul viewed suffering as a tool used by God to guide godly character. He used his stories as teaching tools to help others build a strong relationship with Christ. Three themes in Paul's ministry speak to his ability to cope with tragedy, trusting God, suffering and character building, and walking in the call. Paul encourages the church to identify with the sufferings of Christ, stay positive, and trust God's love to find well-being. The research indicated that when God stands by a person's side, he or she can overcome any traumatic experience. Romans 8:28 helps us to understand Paul's stance on how to deal with trauma. Paul dealt with trauma by trusting in God. The research indicates that with each passing traumatic experience, Paul's trust in God was enhanced. Paul faced trauma with perseverance and power. Further, Paul acknowledged that trauma could not be avoided, so he embraced it acknowledging that the suffering would eventually reveal God's glory and refine Paul's character.

Both Paul and Joseph showcased their loyalty to Christ and God regardless of the trauma they experienced. Paul and Joseph had a covenant that allowed them to endure the traumatic experiences. Their relationship with the Master, affirms their belief in the providential plan of God for their lives.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The historical foundation chapter is important and relevant for the research project because it provides insightful data on trauma. The history of any topic, field, or study provides relevant insight and understanding. When a researcher understands the history of a topic, they are gaining a sense of identity. "Historians have been able to learn about how countries, families, and groups were formed, and how they evolved and developed over time. When an individual takes it upon themselves to dive deep into their own family's history, they can understand how their family interacted with larger historical change."[1]

> Everyone benefits from historical knowledge because it explains humanity itself and how we arrived at where we are today. History is the story of change over time. It also demonstrates that human nature has remained constant. History demonstrates that circumstances and technologies change, but humans still want the same things that they wanted in previous civilizations: wealth, security, happiness, power, spiritual, and social fulfillment, etc.[2]

The historical chapter will focus on trauma and its effects. The problem statement is that trauma produces pain and suffering. Individuals often struggle to understand the

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[1] "Why Is History Important And How Can It Benefit Your Future," University of People, https://www.uopeople.edu/blog/why-is-history-important/.

[2] Ryan O'Connor, "Why Is History Important?," Southern New Hampshire University, https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/newsroom/liberal-arts/why-is-history-important.

theological consistency of God's goodness as it relates to their knowledge about processing traumatic experiences. The hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences.

The research topic will focus on traumatic experiences, both primary and secondary. The research topic of trauma is relevant because my family experienced secondary trauma through my son, Ryan Shazier. In 2017, Ryan experienced a damaging injury that forced him into retirement from the sport that he loved dearly, professional football. The injury came when Ryan was living his best life, was at the top of his game, and was one of the most revered linebackers in the National Football League with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Ryan experienced trauma in an up close and personal way. His physical body was affected as well as his emotional and mental stability. In addition to Ryan struggling with the trauma, his mother, father, and fiancé were challenged as well with secondary trauma. Since Ryan's traumatic experience is limited to articles and a published book, I will evaluate the traumatic experience of Horatio Spafford. Horatio was a well-known lawyer and senior partner in a large law firm.[3] On November 22, 1873, Horatio's family was traveling to Europe for a family vacation. The family consisted of his wife and four daughters. Due to excessive business, Horatio was delayed and was unable to make the trip with his family. While crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the steamship "Ville du Havre" was struck by an iron sailing vessel. As a result, 226 people were killed including the four

[3] H. G. Spafford, H. O. McDaid Spafford, and John P. Wilson, "Attorneys and Counselors at Law," The American Colony in Jerusalem, Library of Congress.

Spafford children. Horatio's wife, Anna, was the sole survivor of the Spafford family.[4] She sent a telegram to her husband which read "saved alone."[5] This traumatic experience inspired Horatio to write the hymnal "It Is Well With My Soul."

Collectively, both real-life experiences shed light on the primary and secondary trauma. More importantly, they both display the ability to cope with trauma and do not surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Both Horatio and Ryan openly admitted that it was their relationship with God and their faith walk that helped them to endure the challenges of their traumatic experiences.

Horatio and Ryan are kindred in spirit to Joseph, the young lad with the coat of many colors who grew to be second in command in Egypt. The historical foundation chapter will help the reader gain greater insight into the relevancy of having a strong relationship with Christ. It will also help the reader to understand that God remains a God of justice when bad things happen to good people. The key is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace your God moments, and God will grant you the strength to manage your traumatic experiences. As you learn to manage, you become an instrument to be used by the Father to help others manage their trauma by leading and guiding by the Holy Spirit.

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[4] "The News in Chicago," Chicago Tribune, December 2, 1873, Newspapers.com, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/75143560/chicago-tribune-1221873-col-1/.

[5] "Western Union Telegram, December 1, 1873," Loc Gov, https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/americancolony/images/ac0006s.jpg.

Horatio Spafford

This segment will provide a historical overview of the life of Horatio Spafford that highlights the walk that he had with God throughout his life. In his early years, Horatio was diligent in consulting God in the decisions he made. Nothing was too small to take to God in prayer and consultation. It was a general practice for Horatio to spend quiet time by the river in the early hours of the morning. During this time, he would read the Bible, think, pray, and reflect on life's imposing issues.[6]

Horatio Spafford, Jr. was born in 1828 in Troy, New York. Horatio's father was an "inventor, author, editor, and entrepreneur, who corresponded with Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison. He may also have developed what came to be known as the Bessemer process for steelmaking."[7] Young Horatio was admitted to the Bar and traveled west to Chicago in 1856. He was a young Sunday School teacher, and it was through a Sunday School class he met a young Norwegian girl named Anna Lawson, who was fourteen years younger than Horatio. Due to her young age, Horatio waited for her to come of age before marriage. His law practice was very successful. Horatio and Anna married in 1861. He was a respected leader in Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church. Additionally, he was involved in ministry on a volunteer level with a well-known evangelist, Dwight L. Moody.[8]

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[6] Troi Penwell, *It Is Well: The Story of Horatio And Anna Spafford* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), 9.

[7] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[8] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

He was tested through many heights and depths. In the union of marriage to Anna, they had five children, four daughters and one son. Through their trials and tribulations, they learned the characteristics of God. They became consistent givers and extreme individuals who gave of themselves to others who were in need. One of the scriptures that Horatio lived by was 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."[9] Horatio "had a unique passion for Jesus Christ, and intense commitment to scripture, and was drawn through a series of very trying times. Much of the hospitality of the early Colony has been scoffed at by those of the religious establishment from where persecution often comes from first."[10] When looking at the life of Horatio, others made the comments that:

> To others, Horatio had always appeared to be so composed, as though nothing could ruffle him, but inside, he worried about how the decisions he made affected others like his family, associates, and business partners. His one salvation had been his faith in God. As long as God was with him, all would be well. Having this time to surround himself with God's presence helped him prioritize his thoughts to concentrate on what was important. He had always trusted that God would be with him come what may.[11]

As Horatio was searching for a wife, he nearly gave up on marriage. He finally met Anna at nearly thirty years old. After meeting her, he realized that although it seemed as if God had forgotten his many requests for a bride, it was simply a matter of God's perfect

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[9] "It Is Well With My Soul," – Spafford Hymn," Horatio Spafford, https://www.spaffordhymn.com/horatio-spafford.

[10] "It is Well With My Soul," – Spafford Hymn," Horatio Spafford, https://www.spaffordhymn.com/horatio-spafford.

[11] Penwell, *It Is Well,* 8-9.

timing. When the two met and married, it was a perfect union and a beautiful family was created.[12]

Horatio once noted the reason behind his prayers to God. He said, "I pray so that God will be with me in all that I do. I pray, because I know this life is only a part of His plan for us. I pray so that no matter whether this deal turns out well or turns out poorly, He will be with me."[13] The sentiments of prayer and trust were displayed throughout the life of Horatio and Anna Spafford. When they had their third child, which was another girl, Anna expressed concern to her husband regarding his possible disappointment that they did not have a boy. Horatio responded by saying, "Nothing we do together could ever disappoint me. God has blessed us with another daughter, and I am overjoyed at His decision."[14]

Trust and prayer were central themes in the lives of Horatio and Anna, and it spilled out into their community, church, and business. The relationship with Jesus was ever so obvious when the city of Chicago was partially destroyed by fire. In 1871, the city of Chicago experienced a horrific fire. The once well-organized city, businesses, homes, and communities were reduced to piles of charred rubble, partial brick edifices, and smoking cinders.

> The elevators and lumberyards were gone. The Court House, Post Office (which had boasted to be fireproof!), Custom House, Chamber of Commerce, Merchants' Insurance Company, and the First National Bank was gone. The Grand Pacific, brand new Palmer House, and the St. Denis hotels were just a memory. Field and Leiter's Mercantile, the Tribune building (also believed to be fireproof), Gossage Dry Goods, and all of

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[12] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 9.

[13] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 12.

[14] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 162.

> Booksellers Row with Keen and Cook, Griggs, and the Western news Company were in ashes. McVicker's Theatre and Crosby's Opera House no longer existed.[15]

With the Chicago Fire, Horatio held true to his faith in Jesus, and never wavered in his belief. The Chicago Fire is of relevance because many of the buildings that were destroyed were still under construction and were being erected as a part of the development Horatio had been investing in over the past several months. Furthermore, these buildings did not carry any insurance which resulted in great financial loss.

Horatio gathered with his business partners to develop a plan to move forward after the devasting fire. Horatio looked at the situation from the perspective of an opportunity to develop a new plan for Chicago. Others did not see this as an opportunity but instead, as a grave loss that placed them at a point of no return. Horatio responded by saying, "God will show us the way." His business partner and close friend, Henry, did not agree with Horatio's trusting in God sentiment. Additionally, Henry was not in the mood to hear about what God could do. Henry stated, "Don't talk to me about your God. I don't want to hear your 'everything will be alright if we just trust in God's speech. Unless your god has a few million dollars in his pocket that he intends to rain down on us, everything is certainly not going to be alright."[16] Horatio responded with a calm reply indicating that he realized Henry was afraid and for good reason. Horatio acknowledged the loss that they experienced and that it was a great loss.

However, Horatio did not see the devastating fire as the end of Chicago or the end of their business deals. Horatio used this as a teachable moment and reflected on the book

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[15] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 188.

[16] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 188.

of Nehemiah. He helped his colleagues to understand how Nehemiah had been instrumental in rebuilding Jerusalem after its destruction in the Old Testament. Horatio reiterated the story to his colleagues to hear and understand how Nehemiah first lamented the loss. Then Nehemiah "assessed the damage, before gathering support and help from other leaders. And last, but not least, he stayed focused and committed to complete the task."[17] Ultimately, Horatio declared that there was no way that Chicago was going to die in the dust, but that it would be rebuilt, and he and his colleagues would be instrumental partners to ensure the success of the rebuilding. Following Horatio's biblical reflection on Nehemiah and words of encouragement, the team was a team again, no longer divided, and accepted the expectation to rebuild Chicago. They started to assess the damages. Another partner developed a report to establish the extent of the detriment and the availability of materials for reconstruction. Another partner worked on producing "a bank loan in the name of all of the investors significant to commence the resurrection proposition."[18] Horatio and his good friend Dwight Moody sought to find additional investors for financial support of the venture. The team culminated with setting additional meeting dates to provide updates and continue the conversation.

The partners were preparing to depart the meeting, Horatio received an apology from his friend Henry for his outburst and attack on God. Horatio responded as a true Christian would by saying, "No worries, my friend. You are not a believer 'yet'," Horatio

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[17] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 188.

[18] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 188.

said with a smile putting strong emphasis on the last word, "but don't forget, God and I haven't given up on you!""[19]

After assessing the damage of the Chicago Fire, many souls were lost, and "over 100,000 people had been left homeless. The church had already opened its doors to shelter nearly 200 of those by making arrangements for them to sleep in the various Sunday School rooms for the past couple of days."[20] When evaluating the number of homeless people, Horatio and Anna were determined to help in any way possible to assist these individuals in getting back on their feet again. As a result, with the guidance of Horatio and Anna, they implemented a community food bank that provided hot soup and bread for the homeless. The husband-and-wife team continued to discuss the idea of helping the homeless, and their daughter, Annie, overheard their concerns. The children learned the importance of helping other people by watching their parents. As a result, Annie suggested that the community provide a full Thanksgiving dinner to families that were homeless on Thanksgiving Day. This became an epic event, and the families were fed a full Thanksgiving dinner to help ease the pain.

The family continued to be conscious of those who suffered and were traumatized because of the Chicago Fire. They had a family friend named Katie. Anna and Katie had a very close relationship before Anna's marriage to Horatio. The friendship expanded to include Horatio once the couple married. According to a newspaper article published shortly after the fire, the article blamed Katie and her cow for starting the Chicago Fires. The article indicated that after Katie milked one of her cows, the cow kicked over the

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[19] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 188.

[20] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 193.

lantern into the hay and the fire started. This accusation caused the community to show anger toward Katie and her family. Some of the community leaders resorted to name-calling and public attacks. At one point, a mob gathered at her home, threw a brick in her window, and wanted to take her life due to the grief that they were experiencing from the loss of their child. The normally vibrant and outgoing Katie withdrew in a shell as a result. Her once-beloved neighbors accused her of killing their children, who were lost in the fire. Katie withdrew into a deep depression and seldom left her house. People began to believe that she had lost her faith in God.[21]

When Horatio heard of the accusation of Katie losing her faith, he responded by saying, "Katie hasn't lost her faith in God. In happy times and in times of sorrow, her faith is always steadfast and strong. No, it's not her faith in God she's lost, it's her faith in people that's been destroyed."[22] This is an interesting reply to the loss of faith in people as opposed to God. One that is not often considered and or explored but is a harsh reality of the world we continue to live in.

After things began to normalize following the fire, the family decided to take a trip to Europe on the S. S. Ville du Havre. Some researchers say the trip was recommended by the family physician due to Anna's health.[23] The trip was planned from November 1873 through February 1874. Horatio and Anna sat the girls down and explained the details of the trip. The girls had lots of questions regarding the voyage, but they were

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[21] Penwell, *It Is Well,* 218.

[22] Penwell, *It Is Well,* 218.

[23] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

eagerly excited just the same. After their line of questions, their daughter Maggie asked the question "Will God know where to find us?" The response that was given by the other daughter Bessie was that "God never leaves us?" It was impressive to Horatio that his daughters had complete faith in their maker.[24] As the plans for the voyage continued to unfold, Horatio asked Maggie "Are you worried about going on this trip?" The reply was "Not really, God always takes care of us so there's never a need to worry."[25]

On the day that the family was to depart for the voyage, Horatio received an urgent telegram that said, "White dead. Heart attack. Your return required."[26] Edward White was a buyer who passed away suddenly due to a heart attack. This recent development required Horatio to refrain from immediately taking the trip with his family. He needed to stay behind to close a business deal with a backup buyer. Naturally, the family was disappointed but agreed to continue the voyage without Horatio. He agreed to catch up with the family once the business deal was sealed. As Horatio put his family on the ship, a troubling look came over his face as he headed back to the ticket office to purchase tickets.[27]

As the family boarded the ship, they blew kisses and waved goodbye to their father. Once they settled on the ship, they began to enjoy the experience. It was stated that their little three-year-old Tanetta was spotted on the ship singing "In the Sweet Bye-and-Bye." Bessie, the seven-year-old was often spotted "in the front lines of the Sunday

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[24] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 224.

[25] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 228.

[26] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 235.

[27] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 236.

School established on board the Ville du Havre by Reverend Emile Cook."[28] Annie, eleven years old, made friends with others her age. Maggie, nine years old was "teased by a boy passenger by telling her that the French children she would meet all had black faces."[29] The first six days on the ship were a common adjustment. However, the seas were rough with dense fog. Anna was noted to muse, "It seemed almost impossible that a ship can cross the immense ocean without danger…When I think that a few planks are all that separates us and all these charming people from the depths of the sea…."[30]

On November 22, 1873, the passengers were awakened by what sounded like two claps of thunder. They witnessed sparks shooting like fireworks from the engine room. There was a forty-foot in length and ten to twenty feet deep hole in the belly of the ship. The Ville du Havre had been hit by an iron ship, a Scottish cargo vessel, called the Loch Earn. The disoriented crew members struggled to launch lifeboats. It was stated that few boats were full of French crewmembers rather than passengers.[31]

> Anna and her daughters were seen "huddled in one loving cluster, their governess and the ministers nearby. Little Maggie Spafford assured her mother, "Mama, God will take care of us." Annie, the oldest of the girls, had seen her mother straining to hold up baby Tanetta, and came to help.

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[28] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[29] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[30] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[31] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

> She provided re-enforcement to her mother's arms before offering her own consolation: "Don't be afraid. The sea is His and He made it." Young Bessie was silent and pale as she clung to her mother's knees."[32]

It was stated that in one terrifying instant, the dark sea overtook the ship, and it was plunged into the frigid waters. It took twelve minutes for the luxurious ship to send 226 people to their deaths. The ship was broken into scrap and landed on the ocean floor. It was reported that:

> Anna Spafford later spoke of being sucked violently downward. Baby Tanetta was torn from her arms by a collision with heavy debris, with a blow so violent that Anna's arm was severely bruised. She flailed at the water trying to catch her baby. Anna caught Tanetta's gown for just a moment before another smashing blow tore the little girl out of her arms forever. Reaching out again, all she could find was a man's leg in corduroy trousers. Anna, barely conscious, was then swirled about in a whirlpool before surfacing near the *Loch Earn.* She instinctively clung to a small plank and the next thing she recalled was the splash of an oar as she lay at the bottom of a small boat. Bruised and sick, her long hair was matted with salt and her dressing gown shredded. But the pain in her body was nothing compared to the pain in her heart as she realized that her four daughters had been lost in the disaster.[33]

It was later reported that a young male passenger was floating on a piece of wood and came upon Maggie and Annie. The girls followed his direction and grasped onto his side pocket while he tried to find a piece of debris that was large enough to support the three of them. He was able to find a piece of debris after a thirty-to-forty-minute search. As he pulled the girls on top of the piece of debris, he watched their weak arms yield and

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[32] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[33] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

their eyes close. Their lifeless forms floated from his fatigued grasp. There were no clues provided to the fate of Bessie.[34]

A band of twenty-eight survivors watched over Anna to ensure that she would not take her own life in her bereavement. It was also noted that as Pastor Emile Cook was lying dying of his injuries, he stated "All is Well," which is a common phrase from the King James Version of the Bible, particularly Jeremiah.[35]

It was upon arrival at Cardiff that Anna telegraphed her husband in what was described as a two-word telegram, "Saved Alone." However, the actual telegram was twenty-nine words which read: "Saved alone what shall I do. Mrs. Goodwin, children, Willie Culver lost. Go with Lorriaux until answer reply Porclain 64 Rue Aboukir Paris Spafford."[36] Another common story is that Spafford wrote the poem in early 1874 as he crossed the place where the Ville du Havre went down. However, the account of Ira D. Sankey which states, "In 1876, ... I was entertained at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Spafford for a number of weeks. During that time Mr. Spafford wrote the hymn, 'It is well with my soul.' P. P. Bliss composed the music and sang it for the first time at a meeting in Farwell Hall."[37]

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[34] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[35] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[36] "Horatio Spafford: It Is Well With My Soul," Christianity.com, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/horatio-spafford-it-is-well-with-my-soul- 11633070.html.

[37] Ira Sankey, *Sankey's Story of the Gospel Hymns* (Nicholasville, KY: Schmul Publishing Company, 2015), 156.

Tragedy in the lives of the Spafford's did not end the night of the shipwreck but it continued to follow the family. The couple had three additional children, Horatio, Bertha, and Grace. Unfortunately, young Horatio lived only two years. The work of Thomas Corts is valuable because it does not stop with the writing of the famous hymnal. Instead, it takes the reader to the end of Horatio and Anna's lives after the shipwreck. The reader goes on to learn that their grief pushed them to a relentless search for spiritual guidance. This search led Anna to declare that she was a prophet of God. The research helps the reader to see the Spafford's as an example of the indomitable human spirit to survive when faced with personal calamity.[38] Further, it points out the reality that regardless of the life of trauma that Anna and Horatio continued to face, they never wavered in their faith and belief in God.

This work of A. J. Mittendorf, *It Is Well With My Soul: Horatio Spafford's Story* sheds another perspective on their story. The work is valuable to the project because it highlights the persecution that the Spaffords experienced at the hands of church members. The work acknowledges the recurring traumatic experiences that Anna and Horatio faced. Many believed that the recurring traumatic experiences were a result of unconfessed sin. The lifestyle of the Spaffords was also believed to be a part of the consistent punishment they encountered.[39]

One could easily argue that instead of Anna and Horatio being punished for their lavish lifestyle and or unconfessed sin, their relationship with Jesus helped them to

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[38] Thomas E. Corts, *Seeking Solace: The Life and Legacy of Horatio G. Spafford* (Birmingham, AL: Sherman Oak Books, 2013), 120.

[39] A. J. Mittendorf, *It Is Well With My Soul: Horatio Spafford's Story* (Lulu.com, 2020), 5.

continue to go forward by trusting in Jesus. Author and professional football player, Ryan Shazier, was open about his relationship with Christ when injured playing football for the National Football League. Ryan's book *Walking Miracle: How Faith, Positive Thinking, and Passion For Football Brought Me Back From Paralysis…And Helped Me Find Purpose* provides greater insight regarding the challenges of his traumatic experience. Shazier explains how his faith and positive thinking pulled him out of depression and helped him to find purpose in life after the trauma. Ryan developed coping skills due to his divine relationship with the Savior. The same could be surmised about Anna and Horatio. The couple developed coping skills as they endured the various traumatic experiences due to their relationship with the Savior.

Ultimately, it is apparent that Horatio had a strong relationship with Jesus. It was through the relationship that Horatio learned to always trust Jesus despite the challenges of life. The relationship with Christ helped Horatio to embrace that Jesus is in control. When knowing that Jesus is in control, a person can render trust and preserve the plan that has been predestined. The plan can render good, bad, or indifferent. Regardless of the challenges of life, it is important to note that God is with you through it all. This sentiment is captured best by Tori Penwell in his book *It Is Well: The Story of Horatio And Anna Spafford*:

> Now he realized that it's always much easier to look back on your life and appreciate that God was in control the whole time. When you're looking for answers, they seem to take an eternity to appear and it's easy to think you've been abandoned but when all the pieces fall into place, that's when God's plan unfolds and you can see how life had been following a divine blueprint all along, if you had only been patient enough to allow its progression in His time.[40]

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[40] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 9.

It is critically important for every Christian to realize that God is in complete control of our lives. Christians are not to dismiss the fact that God allows us to make choices. When we have a trusting relationship with God, a strong prayer life, and the ability to wait on God's divine instruction, He will provide what is needed even in traumatic experiences. With the culmination of prayer, patience, and trust, we will witness the synchronized plan of God unfold.

There is a direct correlation between the history of trauma and the project. In the lives of both Horatio and Ryan, they experienced trauma, and they learned to deal with the trauma that they experienced. Although both had challenging times and moments of depression, they did not get stuck in those areas. Instead, they fostered relationships with God, and continued to move forward, and became examples for others. The historical foundation chapter complements the research project by helping others to understand that they cannot get stuck in a place of depression. They can help others to see that they were permitted to endure the trauma to be a disciple and to help make disciples of others who are faced with traumatic experiences. Therefore, the work focuses on divine triumph over debilitating adversity which will inspire its readers to greater heights of faith in God.

Conclusion

The historical foundation chapter sought to provide a historical lens on trauma and the pain and suffering it caused. With the historical lens, one can gain valuable insight and understanding of a topic, and or humanity. The problem statement is that trauma produces pain and suffering. Individuals often struggle to understand the theological consistency of God's goodness as it relates to their knowledge about processing traumatic

experiences. The hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The research topic focused on traumatic experiences, both primary and secondary. The research topic of trauma is relevant because my family experienced secondary trauma through my son, Ryan Shazier. In 2017, Ryan experienced a damaging injury that forced him into retirement from the sport that he loved dearly, professional football.

Trauma was personified in the life of Anna and Horatio Spafford. On November 22, 1873, Horatio's family (wife Anna and four daughters) were traveling to Europe for a family vacation. Due to excessive business, Horatio was delayed and was unable to make the trip with his family. While crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the steamship "Ville du Havre" was struck by an iron sailing vessel. As a result, 226 people were killed, including the four Spafford children. Horatio's wife, Anna, was the sole survivor of the Spafford family.[41] She sent a telegram to her husband which read "Saved Alone."[42] This traumatic experience inspired Horatio to write the hymnal "It Is Well With My Soul."

The trauma in the lives of Anna and Horatio was great. They suffered a great financial loss in the Chicago Fires. They lost their four children in the shipwreck. They lost a son, Horatio, who lived only to be two years old and died due to scarlet fever. They were openly persecuted and blamed for the trauma that they experienced. However, the trauma appeared to make them stronger Christians who could endure and cope with the

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[41] "The News in Chicago," Chicago Tribune, December 2, 1873, Newspapers.com, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/75143560/chicago-tribune-1221873-col-1/.

[42] "Western Union Telegram, December 1, 1873," Loc Gov, https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/americancolony/images/ac0006s.jpg.

trauma that life presented to them. Collectively, both real-life experiences (Ryan and Horatio/Anna) shed light on the primary and secondary trauma. More importantly, they both display the ability to cope with trauma and do not surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Both Horatio and Ryan openly admitted that it was their relationship with God and their faith walk that helped them to endure the challenges of their traumatic experiences.

Horatio and Ryan are kindred in spirit to Joseph, the young lad with the coat of many colors who grew to be second in command in Egypt. The historical foundation chapter helps the reader to gain greater insight as it relates to the relevancy of having a strong relationship with Christ. It will also help the reader to understand that God remains a God of justice when bad things happen to good people. The key is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace your God moments and He will grant you the strength to manage your traumatic experiences. As you learn to manage, you become an instrument to be used by the Father to help others manage their trauma by the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit.

Some scholars argued that the recurring trauma in the life of Anna and Horatio was due to their lavish lifestyle and or unconfessed sins. Despite the claims, the truth remains that the Spaffords did not waver in their faith. They had a strong relationship with Jesus Christ and did not place blame when faced with traumatic experiences. Instead, they held to their faith and trusted God. They continued to openly profess their love for their Savior and their willingness to carry out the will of the Lord.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As Christians, we often struggle with the fact that a good God will permit traumatic experiences to pierce and alter our lives. The research hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The research topic will focus on traumatic experiences, both primary and secondary. From a biblical perspective, the research topic delves into the life experiences of Joseph. Joseph and his family experienced trauma, both primary and secondary. When evaluating the life of Joseph, it becomes clear that his strong relationship with the Lord helped him from becoming bitter. On the contrary, being sold into slavery, the experience with Potiphar's wife, and prison were life challenges that helped Joseph to know that God was working things out on his behalf. Therefore, Joseph did not become angry with his brothers, instead, he showed love and forgiveness toward them. From a historical perspective, Horatio Spafford endured significant trauma in the loss of his possessions, wealth, and children. Despite the significant and consistent loss, he did not call God foolish but proclaimed that it was well with his soul.

Both experiences with Joseph and Horatio inflicted wounds. Hence, they persevered. It is through the perseverance of being wounded that one portrays the

Theology of the Wounded. Throughout this chapter, the reader will gain insight into the Theology of the Wounded, psychological trauma, the concept of suffering, and the correlation between grief and trauma. After evaluating these specific areas related to trauma, the objective is to have a better understanding of the Theology of the Wounded.

There is a direct correlation between the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences. Once the reader understands the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences, it will assist in the ability to manage trauma. Further, they will see it as a tool to assist others in learning to effectively manage trauma. The project will be designed to assist participants in understanding that once wounded, trauma is not a position to get stuck in. Instead, the woundedness, which generates trauma, is designed to assist the person in helping others to effectively manage the woundedness.

First, it is relevant to gain a mutual understanding of the word theology. "The word "theology" is derived from two Greek words: *theos* ("God") and *logos* ("word" or "discourse)." "Theology" is thus discourse about God, in much the same way as "biology" is discourse about life (Greek: *bios*)."[1] This definition is consistent with Origen of Alexandria, Egypt—the father of theology. Origen imposingly introduced the concept of the Trinity—trinitarian theology. However, Origen's theology was relatively imprecise. Therefore, theology comprehends what human beings think about God and God's acts in history. Consequently, consecrated human consciousness and actions reveal what people think about themselves from the vantage point of God.

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[1] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2017), 297, Apple Books, https://books.apple.com/us/book/christian-theology/id1142650661.

Theology of the Wounded

The overarching concept of the Theology of the Wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that they have been wounded to assist others. The wounded eventually will embrace the fact that their woundedness is a part of their life-transforming journey. Upon realizing and or accepting the woundedness, the wounded shift to helping others to be successful in managing their trauma and or wounds.

The work *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* paints the picture of two groups of people. One group may have caused harm, and the other group received harm. According to Park, far too often an individual can be abused and the abuser. Despite the group, both groups stand before God with different needs. Throughout the world of Christianity, we seek various solutions for both groups. The Theology of the Wounded seeks to bridge the gap between the varying sets of needs and merge forgiveness with healing for the victims. According to Park, it is time for the church to embrace the remedy of woundedness and seek healing. The instrument is named Han, which is a Korean religious term. Han is defined as "the psychic and spiritual hurt caused by unjust oppression and suffering."[2] This concept allows pastors and other spiritual leaders to explore the anguish and trauma that a victim experiences. Further, the concept encourages those who were sinned against to seek forgiveness and healing for the wronged.

To function in a loving community, it is necessary to understand one's pain and wounds. Korean "(Han)" theology provides a framework to understand and overcome

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[2] Andrew S. Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 25.

life's challenges. Calum Walker, a journalist, and filmmaker from London attempts to clarify and develop this definition of Han, "Han is passive. Han yearns for vengeance but does not seek it. Han is held close to the heart, hoping and patient but never aggressive. It becomes part of the blood and breath of a person. There is a sense of lamentation and even of reproach toward the destiny that led to such misery."[3] D. Bannon says in his article that Han is a "Unique Korean Cultural Concept in Interpersonal Relations,"[4] that while "Han is frequently translated as sorrow, spite, rancor, regret, resentment or grief," there is no equivalent word in the English language.[5] Additionally, Bannon posits that "Han is an inherent characteristic of the Korean character and as such finds expression, implied or explicit, in nearly every aspect of Koran Life."[6]

Han as a theological concept, Dr. Andrew S. Park further argues that "Han is an inexpressibly entangled experience of pain and bitterness imposed by the injustice of oppressors...and it is from the experience of the powerless, the marginalized, the voiceless of our society."[7] Therefore, Han is described like an unending black hole of grief and endless pain. Han can cause feelings of regret or lamentation but can also be hidden deep in the unconscious and subsequently lead to highly (self) destructive tendencies in the person who possesses Han. Han can equally extend beyond the individual. Dr. Park adds there is such a thing as a collective Han that can develop and

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[3] Calum Walker, "Han," http://scotinexile.blogspot.com/2011/07/han.html.

[4] D. Bannon, "Unique Korean Cultural Concepts in Interpersonal Relations," Translation Journal, https://translationjournal.net/journal/43korean.htm.

[5] Bannon, "Unique Korean Cultural Concepts."

[6] Bannon, "Unique Korean Cultural Concepts."

[7] Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Orbis Books, 1996), 9.

continue over several generations without liberation breaking one's body, soul, spirit, and relationships on both an individual and collective level.[8] Dr. Park therefore defines this collective Han as follows:

> *Han* can be a social economic, political, physical, mental, or spiritual wound generated by political oppression, economic exploitation, social alienation, cultural contempt, injustice, poverty, or war. It may be a deep ache, an intense bitterness, or the sense of helplessness, hopelessness, or reignition at the individual and collective levels.[9]

Dr. Park states that "Han has three levels: individual, collective, and structural oppression."[10] Individually, Han can be expressed or experienced with the injury of Ryan Shazier, while playing in the National Football League and suffered an injury that ended his career. Collectively, Han can be viewed as the survivors of the Nazi holocaust. Finally, Han can be viewed structurally through systemic racism of a particular class or ethnic group.

Biblically speaking, Joseph and his family experienced Han throughout their lives. Joseph experienced Han when he was sold into slavery. He experienced Han when he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned. Likewise, Joseph's father endured Han while mourning the loss of his son. Joseph's brothers endured Han out of fear of retaliation, fear of grudge-holding, and the fear of righting wrongs.

Jesus' life and death provide a greater understanding of the Han model. Jesus was not rich or privileged in life but fell in the category of the marginalized. Jesus lived under a system of oppression and witnessed the Han of others who were marginalized and stood

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[8] Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing,* 9.

[9] Andrew Sung Park, *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 39.

[10] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 41.

against the injustice caused by the religious and political authorities of that time. Jesus' Cross is a symbol of Han because the Cross belongs to a world of suffering, sin, violence, abandonment, and victimhood. Jesus "emptied himself, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness…he humbles himself and became obedient to death…on the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). Jesus took this humiliation upon himself to bring us to God's presence.

Christ's suffering therefore brought reconciliation for the sinners because there is no forgiveness without atonement. Jurgen Moltmann says, "Christ is the brother of the victims and the redeemer of the guilty. He carries on the one hand, 'the sufferings of the world' and, on the other hand, 'the sins of the world.'"[11] Through Jesus' crucifixion, the Son experienced death in forsakenness, and God, the Father experienced the death of the Son.[12]

The Cross also symbolizes the opposite side of Han - the shame and guilt felt by the oppressor, exploiter, or perpetrator, and a reminder to them of that pain.[13] Shame is experienced along with inner embarrassment and regret. Shame cannot be attached to an act that can be rectified because it is a sense of loss and emptiness.[14] The Cross illustrates Han in every aspect of human pain and suffering of violence, injustice, and oppression. The Cross represents the Han of both the victim as well as the antagonist.

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[11] Marit Trelstad, *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), 132.

[12] Trelstad, *Cross Examinations*, 133.

[13] Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation*, 264.

[14] Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation*, 83.

The Han model displayed on the Cross did not remain as Han due to Jesus' atonement. Jesus liberated and healed victims from the pain caused by social injustice (Han) and laid down his life for their liberation from religious injustice, economic corruption, political oppression, and social destruction.[15] Through the crucifixion, Jesus took upon himself all this violence, injustice, and oppression and thereby empowered other victims and freed them from their bondage. Park states that "Jesus' suffering on the cross exposed the agony and pain of wronged victims and the ugliness, violence, unfairness, and cruelty of wrongdoers."[16] Jesus stands firm with the oppressed who suffer Han.[17] Dr. Park writes, "If we isolate Jesus' life from the lives of the downtrodden, his crucifixion cannot be fully understood or properly interpreted. His life, death, and resurrection are interwoven with the healing and liberating of people."[18] The cross is symbolic and helps us to understand this kind of suffering and subsequent liberation, in line with the understanding of Han.

Father Jerzy Popieluszko (a Catholic priest at the heart of the Polish Solidarity movement in the 1980s), stated:

> Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, the symbol of shame and humiliation became a symbol of courage, of persistence, of assistance, and of fraternity. In the sign of the cross we seize today upon the fact that there is a great deal of beauty and courage in man. It is by means of the cross that we advance toward the resurrection. There is no other way. And this is why the cross of our fatherland, our personal crosses, those of our families, must lead to victory, to resurrection, if we join them to Christ who has overcome the cross.[19]

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[15] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 41.

[16] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 42.

[17] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 43.

[18] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 43.

[19] Trelstad, *Cross Examinations,* 169.

Christ portrayed a perfect example on the cross as the wounded healer, and it is a model that Christians must embrace when faced with traumatic experiences in life.

When looking at the term wounded healer, it is a term that was created by Carl Jung. Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst whose work was influential in various fields, including psychiatry, anthropology, archaeology, and religious studies.[20] The phenomenon of the wounded healer derived from the analyst and the analyzed. The analyst is aware of his or her wounds. These wounds may be activated in certain situations, especially if the analyzed wounds are like the analyst's. It then becomes possible for the analyzed wounds to affect the wounds of the analyst which causes a relationship to develop between the analyst and the analyzed.[21] "There is increasing recognition that non-bereavement losses and other life events may give rise to grief reactions."[22]

Psychological resilience is the ability to self-stabilize essential elements when adapting to trauma. Resilience is found within a person provide the capacity to continue to move forward and cope with the challenges they are facing.[23] "The presence of family is a primary resource of resilience because of the ingredients of kinship resilience, familiar stabilizing patterns of verbal and nonverbal interactions that restore the

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[20] Emily Darowski and Joseph Darowski, "Carl Jung's Historic Place in Psychology and Continuing Influence in Narrative Studies and American Popular Culture," *Swiss American Historical Society Review* 52, no. 2 (June 1, 2016).

[21] C. G. Jung, "The Psychology of the Transference," The Practice of Psychotherapy (CW), par. 422.

[22] A. Papa, N. G. Lancaster, and J. Kahler, "Commonalities in Grief Responding Across Bereavement and Non-Bereavement Losses," *J. Affect Discord* 136, no. 161 (2014): 136-143.

[23] George A. Bonanno, "Grief, Trauma, and Resilience," *Violent Death* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2006), 16.

sense of safety, cohesion, and hope for survival that has developed over the years within the family matrix."[24] The book *Violent Death,* compliments the research by indicating that spirituality after a violent death assists when one leans on one's spiritual beliefs about death. It further promotes the notion that participating in a funeral or memorial practice assists in alleviating trauma after the loss of a loved one because it aids in bringing closure to the loss.[25] Spiritual and clinical stabilization helps to moderate distress, diminish trauma, and reconnect with meaning and living through group intervention. Further, the work posits that if one has a spiritual life, one will not intentionally separate it from spiritual beliefs. Instead, the believer is more apt to incorporate the loss, grief, and trauma into their spiritual practices.[26] The wounded healer provides the church and its theology the ability to name the suffering of those who have been sinned against and provides a platform for their healing.

Psychological Trauma

"Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock, and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea."[27] Researchers have often identified trauma, death, grief, post-traumatic stress disorder, and disasters to have comparable

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[24] Alison Salloum and Edward K. Rynearson, "Family Resilience After Violent Death," in *Violent Death* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2006), 17.

[25] Edward K. Rynearson, *Violent Death* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2006), 20.

[26] Rynearson, *Violent Death*, 20.

[27] APA Authors, "Trauma," American Psychological Association, https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma.

outcomes, all of which could be considered psychological trauma. For this research, all the terms listed above will be considered when discussing psychological trauma.

According to authors Gilliland and James, psychological trauma exists when a person has endured an intolerable situation or event that exceeds the coping skills of a person.[28] Due to the inability to cope, the situation may manifest in multiple forms. Often, the situation or event is too overwhelming to manage. As a result, symptoms are presented that range in grief, suicide, and emotional distress, just to name a few. The symptoms lead to psychological trauma which leads the individual feeling powerless.[29]

> The individual's mind responds to this trauma similar to the body responding to distress. The mind will attempt to reach a state of homeostasis. The psychological trauma represents a condition of acute distress causing a disturbance in the balanced state, thus creating psychological disequilibrium. This psychological disequilibrium is a result of the individual's usual coping skills failing to respond to the psychological trauma. As a result of this response, the individual will suffer from acute distress paired with functional impairment.[30]

Psychological trauma will alter the mental status, and crisis intervention is necessary to return the person to their normal state and promote adaptive behavior. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association developed the category of post-traumatic stress disorder.[31] Additionally, three crisis theories emerged in the early 1980s, including basic crisis theory, expanded crisis theory, and applied crisis theory. Basic theory focuses

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[28] B. F. Gilliland and R. K. James, *Crisis Intervention Strategies* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole Publishing Company, 1997), 3-7.

[29] J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1992), 33.

[30] G. S. Everly and J. T. Mitchell, *Critical Incident Stress Management: A New Era and Standard of Care in Crisis Intervention*, 2nd ed. (Elliott City, MD: Chevron Publishing Corporation, 1999), 2.

[31] AMA Authors, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Author, 1994), 5.

on helping people change and recognize cognitive, behavioral, and emotional distortions caused by traumatic events. The expanded theory focuses on the psychoanalytic, systems, adaptational, and interpersonal theories. The authors posit that anyone can become a victim of "transient psychological symptoms if the right combination of developmental, psychological, sociological, environmental, and situational determinants exist."[32] The applied theory suggests that any individual may react differently in any given crisis.[33] These crisis theories led the way for additional research in crisis intervention.

The three crisis intervention models are the equilibrium model, the cognitive model, and the psychosocial transition model. This model is designed to help the individual regain a sense of control over the malfunctioning coping skills. The cognitive model suggests that an individual can regain control by changing their thinking patterns. The psychological transition model suggests that the individual must regain control of the internal and external difficulties surrounding the crisis. For each of these models, the individual would need to incorporate coping skills, social support, and adequate resources to shift from a non-crisis state.[34]

Concept of Suffering

The actions of a wounded healer according to Henri Nouwen are intentional and can assist spiritual leaders in pastoring their flock with compassion through traumatic

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[32] Gilliland and James, *Crisis Intervention Strategies*, 16.

[33] Gilliland and James, *Crisis Intervention Strategies*, 16.

[34] Gilliland and James, *Crisis Intervention Strategies*, 22.

experience. Nouwen agrees that the wounded healer can relate to what others are going through because of their specific wounds.

Nouwen's work, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, he spells out four ways that spiritual leaders can be a source of life for others due to their woundedness. Nouwen discusses the four chapters as "four different doors through which I tried to enter into the problems of ministry in the modern world."[35]

The first door represents the condition of a suffering world. Nouwen paints a picture of the self-inflicted destructive world that we live in due to the "vast new industrial complexes [that] enable us to produce in one hour that which we labored over for years in the past, but we also realize that these same industries have disturbed the ecological balance and, through air, water, and noise pollution, have contaminated our planet."[36] In addition to the modern day industries, there is a "historical dislocation" among generations. Meaning the value systems are no longer the same from generation to generation. There is a break in the sense of connection as it relates to "cultural traditions, symbols revolving around family, idea-systems, religion, and the life-cycle in general."[37] Nouwen posits there are three ways to reduce the suffering in the world, which is through the mystical way, the revolutionary way, and the Christian way.

The mystical way is when an individual attempts to find the inner way by connecting with reality. "There they discover what is most personal is most universal. They find a center from which they can embrace all other beings at once and experience

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[35] H. J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York, NY: Doubleday, New York, 1979), 3.

[36] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 10.

[37] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 12.

meaningful connections with all that exists."[38] The revolutionary way is when people become aware that the choice is not between a better world or the present world. The focus is placed on the fact that we will transcend to a new world or will not have a world. Finally, the third option is the Christian way. Nouwen notes that "mysticism and revolution are two aspects of the same attempt to bring about radical change."[39] The change is facilitated as Jesus is the One who has manifested that revolution and conversion cannot be separated. The appearance of Jesus has made it clear that changing the human heart and human society are not separate tasks "but are as interconnected as the two beams on the cross."[40]

> Jesus was a revolutionary who did not become an extremist, since he did not offer an ideology, but himself. He was also a mystic, who did not use his intimate relationship with God to avoid the social evils of his time, but shocked his milieu to the point of being executed as a rebel. In this sense he also remains for modern humanity the way to liberation and freedom.[41]

The second door represents the condition of a suffering generation. Here Nouwen places primary focus on the generations of tomorrow. He speaks of the inward generation, which consists of individuals who tend to draw within themselves, according to a study conducted in 1969 by Jeffrey K. Hadden with college-aged students. The study concluded that the inward generation was a step toward becoming sensitive and honest people. Additionally, inwardness presented "mood and form seem unbridled by any social norm or tradition and almost void of notions for the exercise of responsibility

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[38] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 20.

[39] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 22.

[40] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 25.

[41] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 25.

towards others."[42] Ultimately, inwardness does not necessarily mean privatism but suggests that an inner self can be "molded into a commitment to transform society."[43]

Nouwen also reflected on the generations without fathers. He felt it relevant to mention the fatherless generation because anyone raised without a father in the home, a Holy Father, or a Priestly Father, tends to question authority from anyone older, more mature, intelligent, or powerful. This group faces the danger and suffering of being captive to themselves. The peer becomes the standard, and rejecting the fatherly figures becomes the norm, which leads to disobedience and non-conformity. As a result, "there is an obvious shift from a guilt-based culture to a shame-based culture."[44] From a spiritual perspective, the shift occurs from the desire to reach the Father's house, the desire to reach the Promised Land, or to see who is waiting to receive the prodigal son.[45] The fatherless generation raises serious concerns regarding Christian leadership. Nouwen attempts to find resolve amongst the suffering generation by looking at the leaders of tomorrow. The resolve is found in identifying the leader as the articulator of inner events and the compassionate leader.

The third door represents the condition of the suffering of humanity. This door takes the reader through a list of challenges that any individual may be expected to face such as a personal milieu, the fear of death, and the fear of life. Although all the challenges are real, the focus is to keep moving the person toward tomorrow with an

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[42] Jeffrey K. Hadden, "The Prospects are Both Ominous and Promising," *Psychology Today* (October 1969).

[43] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 33.

[44] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 37.

[45] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 37.

understanding that the goal is the realization that with each passing day, the person is moving towards a better tomorrow. The person is moving towards becoming a successful leader, and they are leading people out of the desert into the promised land.[46]

In developing the leadership model certain qualities and characteristics are necessary, one of which is to express and or show personal concern for others. "The beginning and end of all Christian leadership is to give your life for others."[47] Another characteristic is to have faith in the value and meaning of life. Valuing life must be portrayed regardless of life-threatening circumstances. And finally, having hope is the final characteristic discussed in the third door.

> Christian leaders are people of hope whose strength, in the final analysis, is based neither on self-confidence derived from their own personalities, not on specific expectations for the future, but on a promise give to each one of us. This promise not only made Abraham travel to unknown territory; it is also the guiding motive for any Christian who keeps pointing to new life even in the face of corruption and death.[48]

The implementation of these characteristics requires the spiritual leader to enter vulnerability, which is painful and self-denying. However, it can assist in leading others out of prisons of confusion and fear.

The fourth door represents the condition of a suffering minister. This door encourages the spiritual leader to be true to self and deal with loneliness, personally and professionally. It is beneficial to embrace loneliness because once the spiritual leader understands and embraces his or her pain, it then becomes possible to "convert our weakness into strength and to offer our own experiences as a source of healing to those

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[46] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 60-74.

[47] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 76.

[48] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 82.

who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood sufferings."[49] Healing begins to take place through implementing care, compassion, understanding, forgiveness, fellowship, and community. One additional adjective used by Nouwen is the word "hospitality."

> Hospitality is the virtue that allows us to break through the narrowness of our own fears and to open our houses to the stranger, with the intuition that salvation comes to us in the form of a tired traveler. Hospitality makes anxious disciples into powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and makes closed-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and insights.[50]

Hospitality spills into our community and concentration and provides a ray of hopeful sunlight. The ray of hope helps you to relate to being a liberator. The wounds are no longer viewed as wounds but as signs of hope that lead to liberation and freedom.

Correlation Between Grief and Trauma

In addition to Nouwen's characteristics that help us to overcome trauma, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced the five stages of grief model. Her model for grieving was developed as a tool to use when working with terminally ill patients. The proposed stages were developed into a series of "predictable, stages, and tasks."[51] Christopher Hall, in "Beyond Kübler-Ross: Recent Developments in Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement" shares that "her model was one of anticipatory grief; how an individual responds to a terminal diagnosis. Over time this model transformed into the five stages of

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[49] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 93.

[50] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer,* 95.

[51] Christopher Hall, "Beyond Kübler-Ross: Recent Developments in Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement," Psychology, https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2011/dec/beyond-kubler-ross-recent-developments-in-our-und.

grief – (1) shock and denial; (2) anger, resentment, and guilt; (3) bargaining; (4) depression; and (5) acceptance – and was subsequently applied to both the bereavement experience and many other forms of change."[52]

Although the stages were focused on the process of a dying person, the same symptoms are portrayed when a person experiences a traumatic experience. The stages of Kübler-Ross' model are defined as:

- Denial – Avoidance, Confusion, Elation, Shock and Fear.
- Anger – Frustration, Irritation, and Anxiety.
- Bargaining – Struggling to find meaning, Reaching out to others, and Telling one's story.
- Depression – Overwhelmed, Helplessness, Hostility, and Flight.
- Acceptance – Exploring options, New plan in place, and Exploring options.[53]

Traumatic experiences impact people, often the practice to engage the grief that follows is done alone, without the support and assistance of the community, which can lead to a denial of the feelings associated with loss. Some of these same characteristics are portrayed in the biblical narrative of Joseph. Initially, Joseph's father suffered from denial in the loss of his son. Jacob also experienced anger, anxiety, and frustration. Additionally, Joseph's brothers struggled with acceptance. They attempted to bargain with Joseph to determine his level of frustration by referring to Jacob as "your father." Another attempt at bargaining was the action of the brothers throwing themselves at the

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[52] Hall, "Beyond Kübler-Ross," https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2011/dec/beyond-kubler-ross-recent-developments-in-our-und.

[53] Christina Gregory, "The Five Stages of Grief: An Examination of the Kubler Ross Model," Psycom, https://www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html.

feet of Joseph proclaiming to be his slaves. Joseph portrayed acceptance by embracing his brothers and not holding a grudge. He encouraged them by saying "Don't be afraid" (Gen. 50:19).

Conclusion

The theological foundation chapter focuses on the Theology of the Wounded as it relates to traumatic experiences. The research highlights the biblical perspective of the life of Joseph and his family. When evaluating their lives, they experienced primary and secondary trauma. Additionally, their biblical experience is reflective of a community of trauma. The chapter points out the direct correlation between the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences. It is important to get an understanding of the Theology of the Wounded which will assist in the effective management of trauma. The concept of the Theology of the Wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that they have been wounded to assist others. The wounded eventually will embrace the fact that their woundedness is a part of their life-transforming journey. The Theology of the Wounded seeks to bridge the gap between the varying sets of needs and merge forgiveness with healing for the victims. To function in a loving community, it is necessary to understand one's pain and wounds. Korean "(Han)" theology provides a framework to understand and overcome life's challenges. Han has three levels: individual, collective, and structural oppression.

There are various types of trauma, one of which is psychological trauma. According to researchers, psychological trauma exists when a person has endured an

intolerable situation or event that exceeds the coping skills of a person. Additionally, people can experience psychological trauma from events such as death, grief, post-traumatic stress disorder, and disasters. Trauma results in various concepts of suffering, including a suffering world, a suffering generation, a suffering of humanity, and a suffering minister. With suffering comes the correlation between grief and trauma.

Jesus' life and death provide a greater understanding of the Han model as well. Jesus was not rich or privileged in life but fell in the category of the marginalized. Jesus lived under a system of oppression and witnessed the Han of others who were marginalized and stood against the injustice caused by the religious and political authorities of that time. The Cross also symbolizes the opposite side of Han - the shame and guilt felt by the oppressor, exploiter, or perpetrator, and a reminder to them of that pain. Jesus became the wounded healer for all humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The research focuses on traumatic experiences, both primary and secondary. Many times, people are challenged as it relates to dealing with trauma. Christians go even further to inquire, where was God during a traumatic experience? Or they ponder, how could a righteous and holy God permit trauma to come to their lives? Trauma produces pain and suffering. The purpose of the research is to help individuals realize that God is in the traumatic experiences and that just because you experience trauma does not mean that God is not present. The goal of the research project is to help individuals understand that trauma is another avenue to witness the true and living God. The hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The ability to manage trauma comes from a strong relationship with Christ through engagement with the preached word, study, and conversation (prayer). The interdisciplinary chapter will reflect on the discipline of psychology as it relates to trauma from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective.

When evaluating the discipline of psychology, one can surmise that it is a discipline that studies the mental state, processes, and behavior in humans and animals.[1] In early history, contributors' development of psychology came in the areas of choleric, sanguine, basic human temperament, and melancholic from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.[2] It was Rene Descartes who argued that the "mind gives people the capacities for thought and consciousness: the mind "decides" and the body carries out the decision – a dualistic mind-body split that modern psychological science is still working to overcome."[3] William James defined psychology as "the science of mental life and provided insightful discussions of topics and challenges that anticipated much of the field's research agenda."[4] If the mind provides the capacity for thought and the body carries out the decision, when a person experiences trauma they can effectively manage the traumatic experiences by their thought processes.

Psychotherapy can aid in helping an individual develop coping skills, build resilience, and manage unresolved feelings. Adequate psychotherapy can assist an individual from getting stuck in a negative place. Traumatic experiences can lead to an individual to suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other disorders affiliated with trauma. It is critically important to understand the impact of trauma. When

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[1] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

[2] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

[3] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

[4] William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 194.

obtaining an understanding of traumatic impact, will assist the individual in managing the impact of their trauma.

A survivor's reactions to trauma are often formulated by their "experience, the accessibility of natural supports and healers, their coping and life skills and those of immediate family, and the responses of the larger community in which they live."[5] Further, the initial reaction varies to include exhaustion, confusion, sadness, anxiety, agitation, and dissociation, just to name a few.[6] More severe responses to trauma include continuous distress without periods of rest, severe dissociation symptoms, and intense intrusive recollections that continue despite a return to safety. Delayed trauma also exists to include persistent fatigue, nightmares, fear of recurrence, anxiety focused on flashbacks, depression, and avoidance of emotions.

When experiencing these symptoms because of traumatic experiences, one can participate in a Trauma-Informed Mental Health Assessment. The assessment consists of a clinical interview, standardized measurements, and or observations of behavior. The assessment is expected to gather data relating to timing, severity, and symptoms. When gathering data, there are coping mechanisms that can be implemented to assist in managing trauma including giving yourself time, participating in therapy, talking to others who have experienced traumatic experiences, seeking support, developing, and following a routine, avoiding spending time alone, and seeking professional assistance.

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[5] National Library of Medicine, "Understanding the Impact of Trauma," Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/.

[6] National Library of Medicine, "Understanding the Impact of Trauma," Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/.

The dualistic mind-body split that states the mind provides the capacity for thought and consciousness or the mind makes the decision, but the body carries out the decision. If mind and body are consistent with the study and application of God's word, then when thinking about the scriptures and word of God, an individual who has experienced trauma can effectively manage it. Therefore, an individual can make a conscious decision to believe the word of God, even during trauma, and proclaim that they can do all things through Christ who gives them strength. It is important to note that the power of the mind when coupled with the power of God can facilitate the ability to effectively manage trauma.

The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and the project is the mind. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, one can effectively manage traumatic experiences. The most important aspect of the project is to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with your relationship with Christ. Joseph was effective in managing trauma because of his consistent relationship with God. Anger, anxiety, depression, or frustration did not overtake him, although he had multiple experiences with trauma. Joseph's relationship was strong enough to acknowledge, what the devil designed for evil, God turned it into good.

When focusing on the mind, communication is the key factor. It is important to understand the ways to communicate and the effects of communication. "The discipline focuses on contacts and bonds between people, both in private and public contexts, and both face-to-face and mediated through various communication technologies."[7]

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[7] University of Jyväskylä, "Communication," University of Jyväskylä, https://www.jyu.fi/hytk/fi/laitokset/kivi/en/our-department/degree-programmes-disciplines/communication.

Biblical

When learning to embrace the struggle as a secondary trauma stress victim, I turned to the Bible to gain insight regarding the ways to manage the emotional traumatic challenge. Many biblical characters embraced trauma, such as Noah, Moses, Daniel, and the three Hebrew boys. The scripture that undergirds the research is Genesis 50:15-21. The scripture states:

> When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50:15-21).

Biblically, we know that Joseph suffered trauma on many accounts. Joseph was the biblical character researched to identify and relate to trauma. Joseph's story showcased trauma from a primary, secondary, and community perspective. Joseph experienced trauma first-hand. His family experienced trauma from a secondary perspective due to their actions. The community experienced trauma because of the famine in the land. Trauma is relevant throughout the passage of scripture and the text is tailored to teach the reader that trauma can be effectively managed if there is a relationship with the Lord.

The trauma indicators are spelled out clearly. The fact that Joseph did not hold a grudge is an indication of trauma. The fear of revenge that the brothers possessed of their brother, Joseph, is an indication of trauma. Love conquered trauma and Joseph chose to

love his brothers instead of hate. The love for his brothers reflected the relationship that Joseph had with the Lord.

According to James Waltner, "Fear is the common reaction in the face of insecurity and whatever threatens life. However, the psalmist is not overcome by fear; instead, he overcomes his fear by trust in God. Trust in God robs fear of its quality of terror."[8] Joseph's brothers admitted to the committed crimes and humbled themselves, showcased servant-like attitudes, and showcased remorse for the crimes they committed. These actions cause Joseph to weep. "Joseph wept and said, 'Do not be afraid of me, for although your father has died, the God of your father, on account of whom I will never strike you, is still alive."[9] Joseph's forgiveness was a direct reflection of his relationship with God. The concept of forgiveness was not foreign because, in Genesis 39:9, Joseph displayed the same principle as it relates to Potiphar's wife.

Joseph acknowledged that he was not God and that he did not have the authority or capacity to act in a godly manner. Further, Joseph understood that divine purpose would not permit him to react in a personal vengeful manner. Joseph took the perspective that vengeance belongs to the Lord. Joseph's mature relationship with God allowed him to explain that the intentions may have been meant for evil, but God transformed the evil intentions into good.

In the biblical text, the psychological counter to trauma was the ability to cope. Joseph coped with the traumatic experiences he faced by declaring that even after the

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[8] James H. Waltner, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Psalms* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 280.

[9] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 921.

death of his father, he would not change his benevolence towards his brothers. The love that he had for his brothers was also displayed by Joseph's ability to forgive, calmness, and calm demeanor. He was reassuring, and comforting, and the Bible says he "spoke kindly."[10] Joseph was in the coping mentality because he allowed God to right the wrongs. Instead of malice and hatred, Joseph showed his brothers favor by forgiveness and practical affection. These attitudes are reflective of the attributes of God, being a Christian and being Christlike.[11]

Joseph managed the traumatic experiences because he forgave his brothers. Joseph's ability to manage trauma is comparable to King David and Apostle Paul. Each of these biblical characters had a keen sense of their call and purpose, which helped them to manage trauma. Additionally, suffering was viewed as a tool used by God to build godly character. Paul believed in the linkage of suffering and the message of the Gospel. He used his stories as teaching tools to help others build a strong relationship with Christ. Several themes in Paul's ministry speak to his ability to cope with tragedy, trusting in God, suffering, character building, and walking in the call.[12] Paul encourages the church to identify with the sufferings of Christ, stay positive, and trust God's love to find well-being.[13] James Waltner further promotes the ability to cope by indicating that when God stands by a person's side, he or she can overcome any traumatic experience.[14] The

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[10] Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 927.

[11] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndall Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 235.

[12] James Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle* (New York, NY: T and T Clark, 1998), 496.

[13] J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, eds. Trevor Burke, and Brian Rosner (New York, NY: T and T Clark International, 2011), 88-98.

research of Tucker and Andrews also confirms that total reliance on God and prayers are necessary to cope with traumatic experiences.[15]

Romans 8:28 helps us to understand Paul's stance on how to effectively deal with trauma. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Paul dealt with trauma by trusting in God. According to Sande, with each passing traumatic experience, Paul's trust in God was enhanced.[16]

In multiple examples, Paul was faced with adversity. On three different occasions, Paul pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn from his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). Even though Paul was informed that the thorn would not be removed, it did not shake his faith and trust in God. Instead, Paul faced trauma with perseverance and power. Further, Paul acknowledged that trauma could not be avoided, so he embraced it, acknowledging that the suffering would do two things. The suffering would eventually reveal God's glory. Secondarily, it would refine Paul's character.[17] Paul felt as though trauma, pain, suffering, and anguish were a small price to pay for salvation.[18] It is interesting that Paul

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[14] James H. Waltner, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Psalms* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 42.

[15] Ruth Tucker and Leslie Andrews, "Historical Notes on Missionary Care," in *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 25.

[16] Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 67-68.

[17] Timothy Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager, *Caring for People God's Way: Personal and Emotional Issues, Addictions, Grief, and Trauma* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 404.

[18] Adewuya, *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, 90.

made no differentiation in his suffering, whether in ministry or personal. Ultimately, Paul trusted God.[19]

Other scholars agree that the salvation message carries the image of suffering, death, and the image of trauma.[20] Other scholars have expressed that only through pain and sorrow that the power and glory of God can be discovered, and sanctification achieved.[21] Grassi further promotes the notion that as non-believers witnessed how Christians managed trauma they would also witness how Christ assisted the believer through each traumatic experience.[22]

Historical

The biblical foundation chapter helped the reader to identify with trauma from a primary, secondary, and community perspective. However, the historical chapter introduced the reader to Horatio Spafford's story of suffering as it relates to loss. The historical perspective of trauma will help the reader gain greater insight as it relates to the relevancy of having a strong relationship with Christ. It will also help the reader to understand that God remains a God of justice when bad things happen to good people. The key is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace your God moments and He will grant you the strength to manage the traumatic experiences. As you learn to manage, you

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[19] Morna Hooker, "Interchange and Suffering," in *Suffering and Martydom in the New Testament*, eds. William Horbury and Brian McNeil (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80.

[20] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 339.

[21] Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 226.

[22] Joseph Grassi, *Informing the Future: Social Justice in the New Testament* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2003), 106.

become an instrument to be used by the Father to help others manage their trauma by leading and guiding by the Holy Spirit.

The Spafford story displays the ability to cope with trauma and his unwavering ability not to surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Horatio openly admitted it was his relationship with God and faith walk that helped him to endure the challenges of the traumatic experience. Historically, Horatio Spafford dealt with trauma on many levels including the loss of his children and business opportunities.

Horatio Spafford was diligent in consulting God as it relates to the decisions he made. Nothing was too small to take to God in prayer and consultation. It was a general practice for Horatio to spend quiet time by the river in the early hours of the morning. During this time, he would read the Bible, think, pray, and reflect on life's imposing issues.[23] Horatio and his wife Anna learned the characteristics of God through trials and tribulations. They became consistent givers and extreme individuals who gave of themselves to others in need. One of the scriptures that Horatio lived by was 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."[24] Horatio had a unique passion for Jesus Christ, and intense commitment to scripture.

> To others, Horatio had always appeared to be so composed, as though nothing could ruffle him, but inside, he worried about how the decisions he made affected others like his family, associates, and business partners. His one salvation had been his faith in God. As long as God was with him, all would be well. Having

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[23] Troi Penwell, *It Is Well: The Story of Horatio And Anna Spafford* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), 9.

[24] Horatio Spafford, "It Is Well With My Soul," – Spafford Hymn," https://www.spaffordhymn.com/horatio-spafford.

> this time to surround himself with God's presence helped him prioritize his thoughts to concentrate on what was important. He had always trusted that God would be with him come what may.[25]

Horatio once noted the reason behind his prayers to God by saying, "I pray so that God will be with me in all that I do. I pray because I know this life is only a part of His plan for us. I pray so that no matter whether this deal turns out well or turns out poorly, He will be with me."[26] The statement is reflective of how Horatio and Anna lived their lives. It is important to note the value that Horatio placed on talking to God. The discipline of prayer is the main intersection of the research project. Horatio displayed a strong prayer life. With constant communion with God, he was able to cope, manage, and handle the challenges of life. The power couple felt if they could simply talk to God about the challenges, trust God's word, and apply faith to the situation, they could weather any traumatic storm. Trust and prayer were central themes in the lives of Horatio and Anna, and the themes spilled out into their community, church, and business. The relationship with Jesus was ever so obvious when the city of Chicago was partially destroyed by fire. The Chicago Fire is of relevance because many of the buildings that were destroyed were still under construction and were being erected as part of the development Horatio invested in over the past several months. Furthermore, these buildings did not carry any insurance, which resulted in great financial loss.

Despite the loss of their children and financial wealth, they remained faithful. Near the end of Horatio and Anna's lives, their grief pushed them to a relentless search for spiritual guidance. This search led Anna to declare that she was a prophet of God. The

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[25] Penwell, *It Is Well,* 8-9.

[26] Penwell, *It Is Well*, 12.

Spaffords were seen as an example of the indomitable human spirit to survive when faced with personal calamity.[27] Further, it points out the reality that regardless of the life of trauma that Anna and Horatio continued to face, they never wavered in their faith and belief in God. Like Joseph, Horatio reached a level of maturity to portray Jesus as in control of the traumatic experiences in his life. It is critically important for every Christian to realize that God is in complete control of our lives. Christians are not to dismiss the fact that God allows us to make choices. When we have a trusting relationship with God, a strong prayer life, and the ability to wait on God's divine instruction, He will provide what is needed even in traumatic experiences. With the culmination of prayer, patience, and trust, we will witness the synchronized plan of God unfold.

There is a direct correlation between the history of trauma and the project. In the lives of both Horatio Spafford and Ryan Shazier, they experienced trauma, and they learned to deal with the trauma that they experienced. Although both had challenging times and moments of depression, they did not get stuck in those areas. Instead, they fostered relationships with God, continued to move forward, and became examples for others. The historical foundation chapter complements the research project by helping others to understand that they cannot get stuck in a place of depression. They can help others to see that they were permitted to endure the trauma to be a disciple and to help make disciples of others who are faced with traumatic experiences. Therefore, the work focuses on divine triumph over debilitating adversity, which will inspire its readers to greater heights of faith in God. Ultimately, when researching the life of Joseph and

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[27] Thomas E. Corts, *Seeking Solace: The Life and Legacy of Horatio G. Spafford* (Birmingham, AL: Sherman Oak Books, 2013), 120.

Horatio, they can be classified as “wounded healers.” Meaning they experienced the Theology of the Wounded and assisted in helping others manage their woundedness even though they too were wounded.

Theological

In the experiences of Joseph, Ryan, and Horatio, they all were wounded. Hence, they persevered. It is through the perseverance of being wounded that one portrays the Theology of the Wounded. Throughout the theological chapter, the reader gains insight into the Theology of the Wounded, psychological trauma, the concept of suffering, and the correlation between grief and trauma. Each of these themes will assist the project when understanding how to manage trauma effectively. These themes help one to understand the direct correlation between the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences.

The overarching concept of the Theology of the Wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that they have been wounded to assist others. The wounded eventually embrace the fact that their woundedness is a part of their life-transforming journey. Upon realizing and or accepting the woundedness, the wounded shift to the position of helping others to be successful in managing their trauma and or wounds. The Theology of the Wounded seeks to bridge the gap between the varying sets of needs and merge forgiveness with healing for the victims.

According to Park, it is time for the church to embrace the remedy of woundedness and seek healing. The instrument is named Han, which is a Korean

religious term. Han is defined as "the psychic and spiritual hurt caused by unjust oppression and suffering."[28] This concept allows pastors and other spiritual leaders to explore the anguish and trauma that a victim experiences. Further, the concept encourages those who have been sinned against to seek forgiveness and healing for the wronged.

Dr. Park states that "Han has three levels: individual, collective, and structural oppression."[29] Individually, Han can be expressed or experienced with the injury of my son Ryan Shazier, while playing in the National Football League and suffered an injury that ended his career. Collectively, Han can be viewed as the survivors of the Nazi holocaust. Finally, Han can be viewed structurally through systemic racism of a particular class or ethnic group. Biblically speaking, Joseph and his family experienced Han throughout their lives. Joseph experienced Han when he was sold into slavery. He experienced Han when he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned. Likewise, Joseph's father endured Han while mourning the loss of his son. Joseph's brothers endured Han out of fear of retaliation, fear of grudge-holding, and the fear of righting wrongs.

Jesus' life and death provide a greater understanding of the Han model. Jesus was not rich or privileged in life but fell in the category of the marginalized. Jesus lived under a system of oppression and witnessed the Han of others who were marginalized and stood against the injustice caused by the religious and political authorities of that time. Jesus' Cross is a symbol of Han because the Cross belongs to a world of suffering, sin, violence,

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[28] Andrew S. Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 25.

[29] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 41.

abandonment, and victimhood. Jesus "emptied himself, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness…he humbles himself and became obedient to death…on the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). Jesus took this humiliation upon himself so that he could bring us to God's presence.

Christ's suffering therefore brought reconciliation for the sinners because there is no forgiveness without atonement. Jurgen Moltmann says, "Christ is the brother of the victims and the redeemer of the guilty. He carries on the one hand, 'the sufferings of the world' and, on the other hand, 'the sins of the world.'"[30] Through Jesus' crucifixion, the Son experienced death in forsakenness, and God, the Father experienced the death of the Son.[31]

The Cross illustrates Han in every aspect of human pain and suffering of violence, injustice, and oppression. The Cross represents Han of both the victim as well as the antagonist. The Han model displayed on the Cross was ultimately healed and did not remain as Han due to Jesus' atonement. Jesus liberated and healed victims from the pain caused by social injustice (Han) and laid down his life for their liberation from religious injustice, economic corruption, political oppression, and social destruction.[32] Through the crucifixion, Jesus took upon himself all this violence, injustice, and oppression and thereby empowered other victims and freed them from their bondage. Park states that "Jesus suffering on the cross exposed the agony and pain of wronged victims and the

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[30] Marit Trelstad, *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), 132.

[31] Trelstad, *Cross Examinations*, 133.

[32] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 41.

ugliness, violence, unfairness, and cruelty of wrongdoers."[33] Jesus stands firm with the oppressed who suffer Han.[34] Dr. Park writes, "If we isolate Jesus' life from the lives of the downtrodden, his crucifixion cannot be fully understood or properly interpreted. His life, death, and resurrection are interwoven with the healing and liberating of people."[35] The cross is symbolic and helps us to understand this kind of suffering and subsequent liberation, in line with this understanding of Han.

The Han theory interacts with the research and the project because it provides psychological resilience, which is the ability to self-stabilize. It is an essential element when adapting to trauma. Resilience is found within a person, that provides the capacity to continue to move forward and cope with the challenges they are facing.[36] Once psychological resilience is established, one can rely on coping mechanisms. Often, the ability to cope comes in the form of family support, prayer, and intervention crisis. Coping mechanisms prevent the individual from yielding to the negative behavior that trauma presents.

Summary

The research focuses on traumatic experiences, both primary and secondary. Many times, people are challenged as it relates to dealing with trauma. Christians go even further to inquire, where was God during a traumatic experience? Or they ponder, how

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[33] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 42.

[34] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 43.

[35] Park, *Triune Atonement,* 43.

[36] George A. Bonanno, "Grief, Trauma, and Resilience," in *Violent Death* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2006), 16.

could a righteous and holy God permit trauma to come to their lives? Trauma produces pain and suffering. The purpose of the research is to help individuals realize that God is in the traumatic experiences and that just because you experience trauma does not mean that God is not present. The goal of the research is to help individuals understand that trauma is another avenue to witness the true and living God. The hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. The ability to manage trauma comes from a strong relationship with Christ through engagement with the preached word, study, and conversation (prayer). The interdisciplinary chapter reflected on the discipline of psychology as it relates to trauma from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective.

The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and the project is the mind. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, one can effectively manage traumatic experiences. The most important aspect of the project is to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with your relationship with Christ. Joseph was effective in managing trauma because of his consistent relationship with God. Joseph's relationship was strong enough to acknowledge, what the devil designed for evil, God turned it into good.

From a biblical perspective, Joseph taught lessons on trauma from a primary, secondary, and community perspective. Joseph and his family taught us how to manage trauma by forgiving and coping with the challenges of life. Historically, Horatio Spafford and his wife Anna were instrumental in teaching the value of having a strong relationship with the Lord. When one understands the importance of talking with the Lord and

trusting Him, trauma falls in God's hands and the belief that everything will work out according to God's master plan. Theologically, Henri Nouwen taught us that we have been wounded for a reason. Therefore, the Theology of the Wounded was designed to push the wounded to a place of healing and to help others reach that place of wholeness. In reaching a place of healing, one continues to manage and hope with their wounds while helping others. Dr. Park helped the reader to understand the Theory of Han which reflects suffering and marginalization. Jesus lived amongst the marginalized and witnessed their suffering and injustice. Jesus used the cross as a remedy to pain and suffering because Jesus healed all injustices on the cross. He healed through the atonement of His blood and laid down His life for liberation for the world.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This research project seeks to address the overarching issue of traumatic experiences. Many times, people are challenged as it relates to dealing with trauma. Christians go even further to inquire, where was God during a traumatic experience. Or they ponder, how could a righteous and holy God permit trauma to come to their zip codes. The purpose of the research is to help individuals realize that God is in the traumatic experiences and that just because you experience trauma does not mean that God is not present. The goal of the research project is to help individuals understand that trauma is another avenue to witness the true and living God. My hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences.

This chapter provides general information on the genetic makeup of the research and the research project. An overview is given to provide an understanding of the foundational chapters that support the research and the research project. A methodology is provided to assist the reader in understanding the method by which the research was conducted. The implementation of the research was provided to assist in understanding the participants, the focus groups, the discussions, and the project outcomes. A summary

of learnings is provided to capture the lessons learned by participants and the facilitator. Finally, the chapter closes with a conclusion of the work.

Foundational Reflections

The desire to research traumatic experiences was birthed from a place of pain. In evaluating the chosen path provided by God, my formative years and current context consisted of orchestrated synergy by the hand of God. It is no surprise that my early years consisted of traumatic experiences. Although the desire to retaliate violence with violence, that was not the plan that God had for my life. Providentially, God knew that I could assist others with creating ways to manage trauma.

The challenges with the River of Life Fellowship Organization, being a church plant, were expected but did not yield from a traumatic experience. However, when the traumatic experience of Ryan's injury occurred, it left me drained, shattered, void, and darting between two opinions of cursing God and asking for forgiveness from God. The struggle of trauma was real, and just as my son Ryan was contemplating suicidal moments, secretly, so was I. Eventually, I shifted to a place of what I call my "God Moments," and I learned to trust God. The shift of trusting God occurred because I began to embrace my "God Thoughts" which was a deep reflection of the attributes of God. Focusing on God helped me to manage my anxiety, depression, and negative feelings.

The reality is when people experience the intensity of traumatic pain, it appears to be unbearable. Not only for the victim but also for the secondary trauma victims. My wife, Ryan's fiancé, and I were all secondary trauma victims. We did not go through the trauma; however, it impacted our lives, nonetheless. Therefore, I believe that God

allowed me to experience Ryan's traumatic experience and to also be a secondary trauma victim. My family and I have been positioned to help other individuals as they experience trauma. It is my calling to help individuals understand that if they possess high theological thoughts about God during traumatic experiences, then they have a strong chance of managing their traumatic situation.

The greatest challenge with trauma is the pain and suffering it causes. Humanity struggles with the seeming injustice that goes along with suffering and pain. When learning to embrace the struggle as a secondary trauma stress victim, I turned to the Bible to gain insight regarding the ways to manage the emotional traumatic challenge.

In evaluating the text of Genesis 50:15-21, it validates trauma as well as provides an example of how Christians are expected to manage traumatic experiences. The text spells out the fact that trauma existed among Joseph and his brothers. The possibility of Joseph holding a grudge is a representation of trauma. The fact that the brothers were fearful of Joseph's possible reactions is also an indication of trauma. Joseph's brothers were traumatized by the fact that Joseph could have sought revenge on them if he operated in a negative space because of the wrongs they had inflicted on Joseph. However, Joseph chose to love his brothers. Despite the fear of Joseph's brothers, Joseph did not negate the fact that God was a forgiving and merciful God. Due to Joseph's relationship with the Lord, he was able to forgive and extend love to his brothers.

In addition to looking at the Bible for a greater understanding of how to manage trauma, history is also a viable resource. The history of any topic, field, or study provides relevant insight and understanding. I evaluated the life of Horatio Spafford and Ryan Shazier. Collectively, these real-life experiences shed light on the primary

and secondary trauma. More importantly, they both displayed the ability to cope with trauma and did not surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Both Horatio and Ryan openly admitted that it was their relationship with God and their faith walk that helped them to endure the challenges of their traumatic experiences.

In the experiences with Joseph, Horatio, and Ryan, they all were inflicted with wounds. Hence, they persevered. It is through the perseverance of being wounded that one portrays the Theology of the Wounded. To be effective in managing trauma, one must have a general knowledge of psychological trauma, the concept of suffering, and the correlation between grief and trauma. After evaluating these specific areas related to trauma, the objective to is have a better understanding of the Theology of the Wounded.

There is a direct correlation between the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences. Once the reader understands the Theology of the Wounded and traumatic experiences, it will assist in the ability to effectively manage trauma. Further, they will see it as a tool to assist others in learning to effectively manage trauma. The project was designed to assist participants in understanding that once wounded, trauma is not a position to get stuck in. Instead, the woundedness, which generates trauma, is designed to assist the person in helping others to effectively manage the woundedness.

The interdisciplinary focus reflected on the discipline of psychology as it relates to trauma from a biblical, historical, and theological perspective. When evaluating the discipline of psychology, one can surmise that it is a discipline that studies the mental state, processes, and behavior in humans and animals.[1] In early history, contributors' development of psychology came in the areas of choleric, sanguine, basic human

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[1] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

temperament, and melancholic from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.[2]

The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and the project is the mind. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, one can effectively manage traumatic experiences. The most important aspect of the project is to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with your relationship with Christ. Joseph was effective in managing trauma because of his consistent relationship with God. Anger, anxiety, depression, or frustration did not overtake him, although he had multiple experiences with trauma. Joseph's relationship was strong enough to acknowledge, what the devil designed for evil, God turned it into good.

Methodology

The project, "A Theology That Manages Trauma Within The River Of Life Fellowship Church, Inc.," was designed as a six-week focus group discussion, two hours each week that provided information on God. I believe that for people to be able to embrace trauma from a godly perspective, they need to understand God. Each of these topics of discussion assisted the participant in being more knowledgeable of God which assisted in strengthening their relationship with God.

This research project used the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a method of using the results of leadership training to plan, conduct, and analyze

[2] Walter Mischel, "Psychology," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology.

qualitative research.[3] Qualitative research has two components, data collection, and analysis which is linked to the logical flow of the study to its field application. Qualitative research was chosen because it is "a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems."[4] "Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior. It answers the how and why instead of how many or how much. It could be structured as a stand-alone study, purely relying on qualitative data or it could be part of mixed-methods research that combines qualitative and quantitative data. This review introduces the readers to some basic concepts, definitions, terminology, and application of qualitative research."[5]

The research involved acquiring information from participants through surveys, analyzing the worksheet data, and interpreting the results from interviews. The triangulation of the research was used during the six weeks to include a pre-and post-survey, focus group discussion, journaling, and interviews.

Project Instruments

Each participant was asked to participate in a pre- and post-survey. The pre-survey was given at the beginning of the session to determine the knowledge that the participants initially had. They were given the same set of questions on the final night of

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[3] Alysha Owens, *Qualitative Research Method* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 2020).

[4] A. Moser and I. Korstjens, "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 1: Introduction," *Eur. J. Gen Practice* 23, no. 1 (2017 Dec.): 271-273.

[5] Steven Tenny, Janelle M. Brannan, and Grace D. Brannan, "Qualitative Study," National Center for Biotechnology Information, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/#:~:text =Qualitative% 20research%20gathers%20participants'%20experiences,how%20many%20or%20how%20much.

the focus group through the post-survey. There was one additional question that was added in the post-survey. The survey questions were as follows:

1. How would you define trauma?
2. Define primary trauma?
3. Define secondary trauma?
4. Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?
5. Name two attributes of God and their meaning?
6. Describe what has changed for you? (Post-survey only)

The second instrument used was the focus group discussions. Following each focus group meeting, there was a detailed discussion with the participants. The purpose of the discussions was to provide opportunities of clarity, information sharing, and to yield an opportunity for the participants to shed light on their traumatic experiences. Further, the participants were provided journals to capture their experiences. After each session, the participants were given a thought-provoking question that related to the topic of discussion.

After the focus groups were completed, the participants were interviewed with a series of three questions. The questions were:

1. How did you view God during your traumatic experience?
2. How did you deal with trauma from a spiritual perspective?
3. What coping strategies or self-care practices have been helpful for you in managing your emotions?

There were nine individuals selected to participate in the research project. Each participant adhered to IRB recommendations, and their identity was kept anonymous.

The anonymity was established by assigning fictitious National Football League (NFL) names to each participant. The participants used their NFL names in their journals and throughout the discussion. A table was created that identified each participant and paired their NFL. The table was created anonymously, and the identity of the participants was secured by placing the table in a locked desk drawer in my office. Each participant completed a general information worksheet that included name, age, gender, occupation, and education level.

Finally, a mental health professional was in attendance for each session, Connie J. King, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor. Connie provided a wealth of knowledge and was available if discussion points caused a trigger from a traumatic experience. Ms. King's area of expertise is on the Black Church, faith, trauma, suicide, and mental illness.

Implementation

Participants

Nine participants agreed to participate. They were notified of the research project by three different methods, including an announcement in church from the pulpit, a personal invitation, and a follow-up email. Of the nine participants, six were females and three were males. The age range was from twenty-eight to seventy-three. Two were in their twenties. One was in their thirties. One was in their forties. Two were in their fifties. One was in their sixties. Two were in their seventies.

As it relates to their education status, two participants had a high school diploma. Two participants had some college, a minimum of two years. Three of the participants

had a bachelor's degree. Two participants had a master's degree education. Concerning their employment status, three participants identified as retired. One participant identified as a disabled veteran. Two participants identified as administrators. One participant identified as a teacher/coach. One participant identified as a United States postal employee. One participant identified as non-employed.

Week One

The research project began on February 28, 2024. Each session was held at the River of Life Fellowship at 7:00 p.m. Dinner was provided for the participants each evening. Each session began and closed with prayer. During the first session, a welcome was extended, and a brief period was provided for introductions. I explained to the participants that they would be assigned an NFL name to protect their identity. The participants were instructed to use their NFL on all paperwork, including their journaling experiences and while speaking during the sessions. The participants completed a general questionnaire that provided personal information. The general questionnaire included their name, NFL name, age, gender, employment title, and education level. Following the completion of the questionnaire, the pre-test was given and collected.

As a facilitator of the focus group, I shared information about myself, why the research was important to me, and the personal trauma experienced with my son, Ryan Shazier. Further, I informed the participants about the project. The goal of the project is to become better acquainted with the character and attributes of God which will result in a better understanding of the truth of God's love shining forth. Once individuals understand the reality of God's being, they will be more effective in managing traumatic

experiences. The degree of trauma was also explained to help the participants understand that trauma can be experienced at various levels including primary, secondary, and at the community level.

General ground rules were provided such as timing, location, journaling expectations, the invitation to share information and ask questions, and my contact information. All questions were addressed, and journals were distributed. The meeting was adjourned.

Week Two

On March 6, 2024, the second focus group discussion was held. The discussion began with general housekeeping rules for those not in attendance at the first session. Those participants were asked to complete the general information questionnaire and the pre-test. I explained the confidentiality expectations and assigned an NFL name. A brief recap was given on the project.

The group focused on Joseph and trauma. The foundational scripture Genesis 50:15-21 was discussed. During the presentation, I reflected on topics presented in the text. Natural themes of trauma were discussed, such as grudges, forgiveness, coping, managing trauma, trusting God, loyalty, and economic factors. After the presentation, the thought-provoking question was asked, what is your takeaway pertaining to Joseph's management of trauma?

The participants responded in various ways some by stating that they were able to relate to Joseph and his traumatic experience. They collectively agreed that like Joseph, they too learned to depend, and trust in God despite mistreatment by family members.

One participant (who forgot to identify by his NFL name) stated that he lost his mother two years ago and he lost his faith and questioned "why God?" Eventually, he reached a place and began to believe that "this too shall pass." This experienced matured him to know and understand that "that every question does not need to be answered in the moment. God will reveal details as your journey continues because at the time you may not be ready to receive the answer." The participant continued by revealing that Joseph learned how to "make right decision for the people throughout his traumatic situation. His attitude, just because you did this to me, that doesn't take away who I am. Now I am strong enough to understand you were weaker and I am not going to use that against you because that would be doing what you did to me. So, Joseph showed a strong character." Finally, the participant concluded that forgiveness is hard, but we must look at ourselves in the mirror and acknowledge our actions towards others. Participant Tampa Bay Buccaneer agreed by saying that "faith in God and willingness to forgive is key."

Collectively, several participants agreed that Joseph experienced complex trauma which is trauma that is longstanding and composed of multiple instances. Joseph suffered because God had a plan for him. They also agreed that when we forgive, we are not letting others off the hook, but instead we are freeing ourselves. Trauma continues to be in control when we fail to forgive. Joseph was not letting his brothers off the hook. Instead, Joseph was being obedient to God. Joseph chose to use healthy coping methods through prayer, meditation, and forgiveness.

Ultimately, Joseph displayed the love that he had for the Father and refused to allow anyone or anything to separate him from the relationship. Therefore, Joseph always turned the other cheek, even when being wronged; he kept his faith in God. Joseph

realized the higher purpose which enabled him to manage trauma. When Christians decide to trust God, they reach a place of acknowledging that all the answers are not required immediately. No doubt, Joseph shed tears and had questions of God. Yet, in the end Joseph put his faith in the character of God and he was able to say what he said, behave the way he did, and treat people the way he treated them simply because the love of God ruled over Joseph's life.

Week Three

On March 13, 2024, the third focus group discussion was held. There was a recap of the previous week's discussion and the journal assignment. The focus group discussion was centered on Horatio Spafford and his life of trauma. An overview of Spafford's life, profession, and the multiple traumatic experiences that he and his family endured was given. In reflecting over Spafford's life, he lost financially in the Chicago Fires. He lost his four daughters in a tragic shipwreck. He also lost his son later in life at the tender age of two-year-old. Horatio and his wife Anna were openly persecuted and blamed for the trauma that they experienced – other people judged it to be a literal representation of sin. However, the trauma appeared to make them stronger Christians that had the capacity to endure and cope with the trauma that life presented to them. They did not place blame when faced with traumatic experiences. Instead, they held true to their faith and trusted God. They continued to openly profess their love for their Savior and the willingness to carry out the will of the Lord.

The group discussion question for this focus group was, what is your takeaway pertaining to Horatio's Spafford's management to trauma? Carolina Panthers participant

indicated that Horatio and his wife had a real relationship with God which was rooted and grounded, before the incident with his children occurred. The Pittsburgh Steelers participant echoed the same sentiment by saying "Horatio and his wife had strong faith." There was a natural discussion around other biblical characters to include Job, Jonah, and David who went through traumatic experiences. Some participants voiced this was an act of God testing their faith. It was important for them to be tested so that it was recorded for others to know that they too can endure their test. The LA Rams participant concluded that the Spaffords were devasted because of so much loss. She further stated that "in the natural realm you can be hurting but in the spiritual realm you must know that God has you and is able to get you through anything. You must trust God because he doesn't come when we want him to come, but he always comes on time. My takeaway is to continue to stand on God's promises."

The Miami Dolphins participant shared that she grew up in a very strict Church of Christ setting. This strictness was traumatizing. She often blamed herself for the mistreatment from other and endured the mistreatment. She found another church that was recommended by LA Rams. It is a healthy and nurturing church. Miami Dolphins sees the Horatio as one who encouraged himself and this practiced resonated with Miami Dolphins. She concluded by saying this is how she copes with trauma as well, encouraging herself in the Lord.

The Carolina Panthers participant was also raised in a strict denominational environment. She was taught to wear pants, makeup, or jewelry was a sin and that teaching left her traumatized. She was so sheltered by that situation that she was taken advantage of when she got out of that community. Carolina Panthers understands trauma

through relationships, which she had to end because of breaches of trust. She further learned how perfectionism became traumatic for her. It was a revelation to her when she first went to a church that taught the word of God. There is such a thing as religious trauma.

LA Rams agreed with religious trauma and the way in which she was raised. Her aunt (guardian) told her she was going to hell because she got pregnant at eighteen, out of wedlock. LA Rams learned that "as you grow and start to study for yourself, get under the right leadership, and develop your own relationship with Christ, things begin to heal. I have been able to gradually heal from the mindset of bad things that happen are direct consequential punishments from God."

The NY Giants participant needed some time to wrap his head around the Spafford story. In processing the story, he assessed that Spafford understood the sovereignty of God and learned how to find peace with his sorrows. NY Giants stated, "in comparison to Job, Horatio learned and knew not to question God or God's character. God is sovereign in everything God does, and God does it for God's good, and nothing you do can change it. As Christians, we can say we love God, come to church, etc., but how do you act when the pressure is on, and you lose everything? Are you truly going to carry your cross? Even Peter denied Jesus when the pressure was on. Stories like this make you think about your relationship with God and how you can fix this relationship and learn who God is instead of just saying the words."

The feedback from NY Giants sparked a question by Dallas Cowboys. Dallas Cowboys wanted to know what is my cross and how do I carry it? The discussion continued from answers from other participants and the facilitator. I informed Dallas

Cowboys that a cross is whatever burden has been placed on you. Jesus says in this world you will have tribulations, but to be encouraged. The Bible tells us to take those burdens to God. In the Spafford story, the burden could have been survivor's guilt. The Spafford's could have struggled from emotional distress. Both of which could have become a burden for them to carry. Despite the burden and grief, they continued to walk in a relationship with the Lord.

Week Four

On March 20, 2024, the fourth session was held. We began with a recap from the previous week. The focus of the discussion centered on the theology of the wounded. The Theology of the Wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that they have been wounded, awakened to their own wounds, and becoming able to assist others, eventually embracing that their woundedness is a part of their life-transforming journey. Upon realizing and or accepting the woundedness, the wounded person shifts to the position of helping others to be successful in managing their trauma and or wounds. In any harmful situation, there are two groups of people. One group may have caused harm, and the other group received harm. Often, an individual can be both abused and an abuser. Both groups stand before God with different needs. The Theology of the Wounded seeks to bridge the gap between the varying sets of needs and merge forgiveness with the healing for the victims.

The Han concept was also introduced to the group. The Korean word Han is defined as the psychic and spiritual hurt caused by unjust oppression and suffering. Acknowledging Han can provide a framework to understand and overcome life's

challenges. The correlation of Joseph and Jesus' life and death provides a greater understanding of the Han model. Jesus lived under a system of oppression and witnessed the Han of others who were marginalized and stood against the injustice caused by the religious and political authorities of that time. Christ portrayed a perfect example on the cross as the wounded healer and it is a model that we, as Christians must embrace when faced with traumatic experiences in life. The Han model that was displayed on the Cross was ultimately healing and did not remain as Han due to Jesus' atonement. Jesus liberated and healed victims from the pain caused by social injustice and laid down his life for their liberation from religious injustice, economic corruption, political oppression, and social destruction. Through the crucifixion, Jesus took upon himself all this violence, injustice, and oppression and thereby empowered other victims and freed them from their bondage.

The group discussion for the week was what is your takeaway pertaining to the theology of the wounded. Kansas City Chiefs asked the question if you are wounded by someone else and you are trying to get past the wound, if you're not able to talk to the person and work it out, how do you get past it? I responded by stating that you must take it case by case. I further noted that you do not have to have a conversation with someone to forgive them. You may be going to God every day asking for forgiveness yet holding onto someone you are not able to forgive. Sometimes you will not get that conversation with the person who hurt you, but you must find a way to get past it regardless for your sake and forgive.

Ironically, LA Rams did not know Kansas City Chiefs was a member at the church. They are both grandmothers to the same granddaughter. When LA Rams arrived

at the church, she was able to put her differences in the past and embrace Kansas City Chiefs to improve their relationship. Forgiveness was a part of the plan on both sides, and they have a good relationship now. They are an excellent example of forgiveness.

Carolina Panthers reflected on the Han concept and made the comparison to racial profiling. She has internalized fear for her son and his treatment by society. “She sees “Han” in the way black people, especially black men, have been treated and racially profiled by society – even down to the way my son’s hair is styled. It is a great concern for me.” In comparison, NY Giants resonated with the wounded healer as it relates to his Haitian origins. He sought out a relationship with his father at age twenty-three, noticing patterns in himself that he suspects he got from his father. “Though you don’t traditionally ask questions like this in my culture, I felt a great weight lifted after having this conversation with my father.” He began to see the hypocrisy of the people in his culture whose actions would not reflect the Christian principles they claimed to follow. This weakened his relationship with that church.

Miami Dolphins felt the theology of the wounded was heavy because it is asking the wounded to constantly forgive. Eventually, when you become a wounded healer and help someone else, it can sometimes become too heavy when you find yourself trying to save everyone. Therefore, it can be too heavy when you do not set boundaries with yourself. It is an uncomfortable journey when you do not have all the answers. It is even more uncomfortable to admit that “you do not know or have all the answers.” The greatest responsibility is to become comfortable in pointing people in the right direction, to Jesus. It is critically important to set boundaries and prevent yourself from taking on

the savior complex. In doing so, one can suffer from sickness and stress because of misplacing responsibilities.

The discussion ended with participants indicating that the classes has been very productive and helpful in their management with trauma. Several participants indicated that the class needs to be offered to the whole church. Other recommendations were to add career trauma, systemic racism, the mistreatment of blacks, and the lack of education to the various types of trauma that one can experience.

Week Five

On March 27, 2024, the fifth session was held. The discussion started with a recap from the previous session. The discussion focused on the psychology of trauma. A definition of psychology was provided which is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions. When a person experiences trauma they can effectively manage the traumatic experiences by their thought processes. The dualistic mind-body split that states the mind provides the capacity for thought and consciousness (the mind makes the decision), but the body carries out the decision. If mind and body are consistent with the study and application of God's word, then when thinking on the scriptures and word of God, an individual that has experienced trauma can effectively manage it. Therefore, an individual can make a conscious decision to believe the word of God, even during trauma, and proclaim that they can do all things through Christ who gives them strength. The power of the mind when coupled with the power of God can facilitate the ability to effectively manage trauma. The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and this project of managing trauma is the mind. If one can focus on biblical

thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, they can effectively manage traumatic experiences. The most important aspect of the project is to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with your relationship Christ. When focusing on the mind, communication is the key factor. It is important to understand the ways to communicate and the effect of communication. For Christians, prayer is this essential form of communication with God.

Remember our text from Genesis 50:15-21, Joseph was effective in managing and coping with trauma because of his consistent relationship with God. The Spafford story displays the ability to cope with trauma and his unwavering ability not to surrender to the challenges that trauma presents. Horatio openly admitted that it was his relationship with God and faith walk that helped him to endure the challenges of the traumatic experience. Theology of the wounded provides psychological resilience, which is the ability to self-stabilize. It is an essential element when adapting to trauma. Resilience is found within a person which provides the capacity to continue to move forward and cope with the challenges they are facing. Once psychological resilience is established, one can begin to rely on coping. Often the ability to cope comes in the form of family support, prayer, and crisis intervention.

The group discussion centered on what is your takeaway pertaining to the psychology of trauma? LA Rams admitted that by participating in these classes, she has learned that she has more than one trauma. She is also learning how to manage it and being encouraged by the pastor's wife's words to be bold, give a compliment, and reach out to people. Carolina Panthers added to the discussion by stating she thought that she was fully healed and delivered from a past trauma, but she realized that just talking about

trauma, different places, other people's situations, sparked those memories from the past. Carolina Panthers acknowledged that being in the presence has triggered her traumatic experiences. Kansas City Chiefs further added that odors and certain smells can serve as triggers as well.

The therapists added that triggers help us remember that the healing is not complete, but that it is in process. When you can talk about something and the subconscious is relaxed, this is where the healing and renewing of your mind occurs. Using Cognitive Behavior Therapy, you can transform your mind to remove flawed thinking. There is a difference between flawed thinking and thinking that is heavenly and cognitive. Your body responding to your triggers is a sign your healing is not yet complete. It is important to address and acknowledge triggers
because this is how you acknowledge the subconscious to process and get rid of the reactions. Additionally, it is important to express what you are feeling because suppressing the feelings will result in an explosion.

Week Six

On April 3, 2024, the final session was held. The discussion began with a recap of all previous discussions. There was a presentation from Connie King, a licensed Mental Health Counselor. She spoke to the group on "The Black Church: Faith, Trauma, Suicide, and Mental Illness. She shared a video that reflected on the topics listed above. Connie was in attendance for all the session to assist in guiding the discussion and to ensure adequate professional care was in place if someone had a trigger to the discussion. I also provided a guided discussion on the attributes of God. Following the discussion, the

participants took the post-test. There was a question-and-answer period, followed by closing remarks, prayer, and appreciation for participation.

Pre-and-Post-Test Results

Pre-Test and Post Test Results

The pre-test was administered during the first day of the focus group session. There were five questions which asked how do you define trauma; define primary trauma; define secondary trauma; why does God allow bad things to happen to good people; and name two attributes of God and their meaning. A total of eight participants responded to the pre-test to include: NY Giants, Dallas Cowboys, Miami Dolphins, Los Angeles Rams, Carolina Panthers, Baltimore Ravens, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

How Do You Define Trauma?

Collectively in the pre-test, all participants had a good understanding of the definition of trauma. In the various definitions that were given they expressed that trauma caused depression, anxiety, and PTSD and has a negative impact on a person's life. Several of the participants indicated that trauma affects the person mentally, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. They further elaborated that trauma affects your thoughts, behaviors, lifestyles, living conditions, and the inability to function properly. Collectively, they defined trauma as having a profound impact and effect on one's daily life.

With the post-test results of this question, the responses were basically the same. The greatest change was that 40% of the participants indicated that trauma plays with the mind. NY Giants further elaborated that trauma could be experienced first-hand or second-hand. Miami Dolphins indicated that trauma could occur repeatedly. Pittsburgh Steelers noted that trauma is often a sudden experience that catches one off guard.

Define Primary Trauma?

In the pre-test, one participant indicated that he was not sure of the definition of primary trauma. Other participants indicated that primary trauma was trauma that a person experienced firsthand. Several participants indicated that trauma affects you cognitively and behaviorally. Collectively, all the participants indicated that primary trauma causes pain. Primary trauma can be triggered with a thought, memory, or a reminder from the past.

With the post-test, 70% of the participants specifically identified primary trauma as an experience that happened to the person first-hand. NY Giants indicated that it was a first-hand experience but also stated that one could witness trauma first-hand and be considered the primary target because of the first-hand witness account.

Define Secondary Trauma?

For the pre-test, one participant indicated that they were not sure of the meaning of secondary trauma. The Baltimore Ravens indicated that a secondary trauma is a trauma caused due to an indirect situation that caused a mental or emotional state. The NY Giants participant coined trauma as an encounter when an individual experience the

trauma through someone else or after it happens. Collectively, the other participants indicated that the trauma did not directly happen to the person, but affected the person, nonetheless. The participants indicated that secondary trauma caused pain and had an emotional, physical, phycological, and or mental effect.

With the post-test, 80% of the participants agreed that secondary trauma was trauma experienced by someone else. Additionally, 100% of the participants indicated that secondary trauma was a result of trauma experienced by a loved one, a family member, or someone in close relationship. Finally, Kansas City Chiefs elaborated by stating that it was an injury that required more than a band-aid and often caused various types of stress disorders.

Why Does God Allow Bad Things To Happen To Good People?

The responses from the participants varied with this question for the pre-test. NY Giants stated that God is the one that allows it, but sinners and sins causes things in humanity. God intentions was for humanity was to live a good life without bad things. Dallas Cowboys believes humanity experiences bad thing to determine if they will keep your faith in God. Miami Dolphins believes that God allows bad things to happen because it is in God's will for your life. Los Angeles Rams believes it is a mechanism to draw you closer to God, and or to learn how to trust God. Carolina Panthers believes that bad things happen to not only good people but bad people as well. "I believe the rain falls on the just and the unjust. It's life!" The Baltimore Ravens, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Tampa Bay Buccaneers felt that bad things result in creating a path that encourages

people to turn toward or away from God. They believe these things are a testing of faith and to exercise free will.

The responses in the post-test continued to be varied. Fifty percent of the participants felt that bad things were allowed to happen because it was the mechanism used by God to teach various lessons. Los Angeles Rams felt we learn to trust God, establish hope, and test our faith so that Christians can learn to lean on God. Baltimore Ravens felt that God allowed bad things to happen so that people will trust God and have faith in God. Pittsburgh Steelers echoed the sentiment that bad things help to grow the Christian's faith. Kansas City felt it was a teaching mechanism to help Christians learn how to cope. Dallas Cowboys indicated that God does not control these things, but the devil often causes bad things to happen to good people. NY Giants and Miami Dolphin felt bad things happen because of sin. They further indicated that God's intentions for humanity was good. God did not intend for humanity to suffer or go through bad things. Carolina Panthers summed it up by saying that God is a just God. God allows the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

Name Two Attributes of God And Their Meaning?

In the pre-test, most (approximately 90%) of the participants were unable to effectively answer this question. One participant responded by saying he was unsure of God's attributes. The other participants were able to describe an attribute but unsuccessful in naming an attribute. NY Giants and Miami Dolphins indicated that God was unchanging. Carolina Panthers and Pittsburgh Steelers identified God as love. God is

"everlasting, unlimited, and indefinitely love." Other participants identified God's attributes as truth and trust, merciful, powerful, and peace.

In the post-test, all the participants were able to name two attributes of God and to effectively explain them. The primary two that were mentioned most frequently were Omniscient and Omnipresent. It was important for the participants to note that regardless of the trauma, God is with them; and that God is all-knowing. Several of the participants indicated that it was comforting to know that God knows and understands their struggles with trauma. "God will never leave nor forsake you."

Describe What Has Changed For You Since Completing This Session?

This question was only a part of the post-test. The participants were granted an opportunity to indicate what they learned as a result of participating in the focus group. NY Giants indicated that we all can become wounded healers and become God's righteous weapon. Dallas Cowboys stated that he understands that he is not perfect, yet "God love me too even though I may have caused trauma or been the victim of trauma, I realized that God loves me too." Miami Dolphins indicated that "My faith is in the process of being restored. I am re-learning to relinquish my problems over to God and making it a habitual practice." Los Angeles Rams looks at things more spiritual and to continue to be steadfast and stand on God's word. She also reads the Bible more frequently so that she has a sword to fight back any negative thoughts. Carolina Panthers focus is transitioning into becoming a wounded healer. "I want to become a righteous weapon to help others." Baltimore Ravens stated, "Since completing this session, I have learned to realize everyone experiences trauma, but Christian believers allow their faith

in God to help them to deal with the trauma in a more positive manner." Kansas City Chiefs says, "I am now able to face trauma and move forward."

Journal Reflections

After each session, the participants were given moments to reflect on the discussion that had occurred. They were promoted with questions following each session. The questions were Elaborate on the effectiveness of how Joseph managed trauma between his brothers? What spiritual characteristic did Horatio Stafford display while effectively managing trauma? Why is it often challenging to operate from the perspective of the theology of the wounded? What are the important aspects to remember as it pertains to the psychology of trauma? When evaluating the responses some of the participants did not answer all the questions.

Question One: Elaborate on the effectiveness of how Joseph managed trauma between his brothers? Baltimore Ravens felt Joseph effectively managed trauma between his brothers by allowing his belief in God and his faith in God to help him deal with the hurt and the trauma he experienced. Joseph continued to operate in love despite the inflicted hurt by his brothers. The most important thoughts you can have are the thoughts that you have about God. Carolina Panthers, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Kansas City Chiefs agreed that Joseph was effective in managing trauma because of the love that he shared toward his family and the forgiving spirit that he received from God.

Kansas City Chiefs elaborated further by reflecting on the scriptures, "Don't be afraid, am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So, then don't be afraid.

I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them." The greatest takeaway is that no weapon formed shall prosper. It will not work. God will do what he said he will do. He will stand by his word, and he will come through. He is not a man that he should lie.

Miami Dolphins indicated that Joseph relied on his faith in God and understood the bigger purpose for all the things that happened to him leading up to his position during the famine. Joseph's story solidifies the goodness of God and how God is unchanging and forgiving.

Los Angeles Rams indicated that the effectiveness of how Joseph managed trauma between his brothers had to begin with the healing process before he could move forward. Joseph had to begin living in the imperfection with his brothers to test them so they could build confidence in him to trust him to move forward. You must gain trust again once you have been hurt. Joseph had to feel remorseful, forgiveness, and love before he could grant his brothers (family) protection and safety.

Dallas Cowboys reflected by stating that Joseph understood his keen call and purpose, which helped him to manage his trauma. Realizing your purpose is critically important when managing trauma. The same concept resonated with Paul later in the scriptures, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." New York Giants did not answer the question.

Question Two: What spiritual characteristic did Horatio Stafford display while effectively managing trauma? Baltimore Ravens indicated that ultimately, the trust, dependency, and faith that Horatio had in God is what helped him to manage trauma.

Continuous loss did not alter Horatio's mindset or the established relationship that he had with God. Additionally, Horatio realized that the loss was permitted by God. Therefore, he believed that God's grace and mercy would carry him through the trials that he faced.

Carolina Panthers indicated that Horatio was able to effectively manage trauma because of his belief in God. I am sure he experienced sleepless nights and cried tears, but his faith was in the Lord. He never lost his faith and belief in God regardless of the challenge. We will never know the true depths of his pain and suffering. It is apparent that he realized that bad things happen to good people, but that does not diminish the righteousness or the faithfulness of God.

Kansas City Chiefs stated that Horatio acknowledged that God is a God of justice when bad things happen to good people. The key is to stay connected to the true vine and embrace your God moments because God cares for you. So, you think you cannot make it through, and you feel like all your hope is gone, just remember you are not alone. God cares for you.

Miami Dolphins believed Horatio Spafford displayed courage, resilience, and steadfast faith to effectively manage his trauma. Despite enduring multiple, and deep losses, Spafford continued to show great courage. It appears he continued with life despite the hardships he faced. Through his actions, it demonstrated his resilience, and his ability to overcome what happened to him; and because of his courage and resilience, I believe his faith was strengthened after witnessing what God had given back after his losses.

NY Giants felt Joseph relied on God by believing in God and God's plan for his life through the ups and downs. Joseph did not waiver in his faith and believed that God's

character never changed because God is the Alpha and the Omega. Joseph was very spiritual, and he knew he was not in control of his life. Joseph believed in doing the right things. He stayed loyal and did not hold grudges which helped him to have a pure heart. Based on the condition of Joseph's heart, he was able to forgive his brothers, which is not an easy task to accomplish. Joseph understood that "this too shall pass." Joseph realized that he may not get over it, but he would get through it. What the enemy meant for evil; God turned it around for his good. Horatio was a true example of a man of faith, one of his spiritual characteristics is the fact that he truly comprehends the sovereignty of God. He understood that God's character does not change, and he must carry his cross through the good and the bad. Horatio learned that God could handle and answer all the questions that he had. He remained connected to the true and living God; and his faith presented how God remains a God of justice when bad things happen to us.

LA Rams indicated that the spiritual characteristics Horatio Spafford displayed while effectively managing trauma was, he demonstrated faith. He demonstrated unwavering faith in God by trusting and remaining steadfast despite experiencing hurt, grief, and the loss of his daughters. Another characteristic was hope. Horatio kept the faith, hope, and forgiveness to trust in God's plan. God will give you a sense of peace during suffering so therefore, you must have faith in God. Horatio's characteristics to me enabled him to get through some tough times in suffering from grief and he found consolation.

Dallas Cowboys indicated that Horatio never stopped striving for God's grace. He continued to serve God; and he never stopped believing. God blessed him with more children after the loss of the first three. Both Horatio and his wife Anna are example of

never losing your faith or never stop believing in the Father. Pittsburgh Steelers did not answer the question.

Question Three: Why is it often challenging to operate from the perspective of the theology of the wounded? Baltimore Ravens felt it was challenging to operate from the theology of the wounded because the wounded may still feel as if they are going to feel the hurt based off their past situations. Carolina Panthers further added that it was challenging because of the memory, hurt, misunderstanding, insensitivity, and pain that you endure repeatedly. It is amazing how you may feel that you can forgive, but in essence there maybe constant reminders of the trauma, the hurt. The trauma can be so damaging that your body suffers because of the pain. To recover from the wound, one must realize that it is a process. It is important to know that everyone heals differently and on a different timetable. Often, healing requires a combination of spiritual guidance, therapy, and counseling.

Kansas City Chiefs indicated that it was challenging because it requires a transformation that many may not be willing to make. The wounded healer journey involves transforming our wounds into sources of spiritual and emotional growth, allowing us to bring hope and healing to those in need. For Nouwen, the path to healing and help is a reflection and acceptance of woundedness and vulnerabilities. The promise of God and this ray of hope helps you to relate to being a liberator and turn anxious disciples into powerful witnesses. Wounded healers are people whose painful experiences enable them to help others. The theology of the wounded is designed to prompt, stir, focus, and invigorate the wounded to continue to move forward while understanding that

they have been wounded to assist others. Wounded healers are good listeners, empathetic, accepting, and resourceful.

Miami Dolphins added to the conversation by stating there are a few things that pose a challenge to operating from the perspective of the theology of the wounded. Becoming a wounded healer becomes a burden, or heavy, if not managed appropriately. You can develop the superhero complex attempting to save everyone and it becomes a disappointment when you cannot. Sometimes, we can perceive the actions of someone else incorrectly which creates a false narrative and teach others according to an incorrect perception of something that may have occurred especially if you have never discussed it with the one identified as the wrongdoer.

NY Giants felt it is challenging to operate from the perspective of the theology of the wounded because forgiving and forgiveness is hard for us to do. We tend to look more on the revenge/vengeance side because it is easier for us to do the wrong thing and protect our pride. Dwelling in pain changes our perspectives and drives us towards darkness. We need God to intervene and seek therapy/counseling for us to heal and become wounded healers. I believe that God is the only one that can change our hearts and teach us how to use the Han Theory. The Bible said love your enemy just like you love yourself. We must learn how to forgive others and understand that revenge is for the Lord. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of the wounded healer.

Los Angeles Rams indicated it can be very challenging depending on the way you look at certain types of Christian teaching. In dealing with trauma, it can be challenging if one has a hard time reconciling pain and suffering in the social life, cultural, the way a leader can teach by explaining or emphasizing health, and success as spiritual favors from

God. This type of theology of the wounded may also cause people to hide their feelings or discourage them from discussing their hurt, wounds, or trauma among others openly. Dallas Cowboys felt it was challenging to operate from the perspective of the theology of wounded because of self-pride. Pittsburgh Steelers did not answer the question.

Question Four: What are the important aspects to remember as it pertains to the psychology of trauma? Baltimore Ravens felt the important aspects to remember as it pertains to trauma are do not suppress your negative thoughts or feelings, as it will cause health defects; speak positive thoughts when experiencing trauma; if you feel an oncoming trigger, fear, and or anger, speak God thoughts; allow yourself to heal as these traumatic experiences will become a testimony and potentially allow you to be a wounded healer. Ultimately, "this experience has taught me that our trials and tribulations with trauma has allowed me to be a wounded healer. My trauma allowed me to have a testimony because of the characteristics of trust and dependency. I have adopted a "this too shall pass" concept and I apply it to my experiences knowing that I am never alone."

Carolina Panthers indicated that the most important thoughts you can have is a God thought. God thoughts are so important when dealing with the psychology of trauma because mentally you focus on your inner thoughts, controlling and managing your thoughts, channeling your thoughts to God and the power that God has given you, and focusing on healing as opposed to being wounded. It is important to know the value of praying, making daily decrees and declarations through the blood of Jesus. Therefore, your thoughts become godly thoughts, and your ways become patterned after Jesus Christ. When operating from godly thoughts, our ways and actions and not centered

around the pain, suffering, or trauma. Instead, prayers are centered around a loving Father that provides refuge in the time of trouble.

The Kansas City Chiefs addressed the question by stating that the mind provides the capacity for thought and the body carries out the decision to act. When a person experiences trauma they can effectively manage the traumatic experiences by their thought process. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, they can effectively manage traumatic experiences. Joseph had always believed that God had a purpose for him, and this faith kept Joseph connected with God while going through tough times. Joseph's faith journey was one of complete trust and dependence on God. The Spafford story displays the ability to cope with trauma and his unwavering ability not to surrender to the challenges that trauma presented were commendable, to say the least. Horatio openly admitted that it was his relationship with God and his faith walk that helped him to endure the challenges of the traumatic experience.

Miami Dolphins stated it is important to remember that it is okay to be a Christian, keep your faith, and still seek professional therapeutic help. Unless you address the trauma, it will continue to manifest itself in ways that can cause more hurt, pain, and trauma. It is important to remember that God can and will give you what you need to heal from trauma, and the resources (His Word) to manage it.

Los Angeles Rams indicated that trauma affects the body, soul, and mind – for example, a person can suffer from obesity, by being stressed and consistently eating. Another aspect of trauma is hormonal loss of hair, and all these aspects fall under the body, soul, and mind is very important for therapy and or treatment. Dallas Cowboys

indicated that you cannot heal what you cannot feel. We should not let negative thoughts control and affect how you feel. He who masters self is a master of the mind, body, and soul. NY Giants and Pittsburgh Steelers did not answer the question.

Interviews

Following the focus group, I conducted interviews with five participants from the focus group. The participants were LA Rams, Carolina Panthers, Baltimore Ravens, Dallas Cowboys, and Pittsburgh Steelers. They were asked three questions: how did you view God during your traumatic experience? How did you deal with trauma from a spiritual perspective? What copies strategies or self-care practices have been helpful for you in managing your emotions.

How Did You View God During Your Traumatic Experience?

LA Rams stated that "I view God as my Savior, to listen to me when I felt like I couldn't talk to anyone else about it." LA Rams has a trusting relationship with God. Therefore, God is the One person they can always talk to who listens and answers prayers. Carolina Panthers views God m as a rescuer, a Savior, a spirit that helps to her get through traumatic experiences. Baltimore Ravens viewed God as faithful and dependable. Dallas Cowboys admitted that he questioned God. Why did this happen? Why are you letting me go through this bad stuff? However, he did not blame God. Pittsburgh Steelers viewed God as a healer because of his mother's prayers.

How Did You Deal With Trauma From A Spiritual Perspective?

LA Rams dealt with trauma by reading God's word, walking in obedience, with morals, respect, and putting God before all things. Carolina Panther dealt with trauma through prayer, meditation, and therapy. She has spiritual friends that she talks to and believes in Divine healing. Just like with Joseph, God can turn it around for her good. Baltimore Ravens dealt with trauma knowing and understanding that she was able to allow God to guide her in the correct direction. She acknowledged that it was a journey and that there would be deliverance and healing. Dallas Cowboys is still dealing with trauma and is a work in progress. Pittsburgh Steelers deals with trauma by coping with it and taking one day at a time.

What Coping Strategies Or Self-Care Practices Have Been Helpful For You In Managing Your Emotions?

LA Rams' coping strategies were being happy, learning to take the negative and turn it around positive. Quoting Bible verses, scripture, talking about God, and trusting God!" It was also helpful to be present with others by being an encouragement while they were experiencing trauma. Carolina Panthers started a Tuesday night prayer group two years ago. Prayer is one of her coping strategies. She is also engaged with self-care through various "vitamins, hydration, rest, meditation, me-time, praying three times a day, and listening to favorite music." Baltimore Ravens engages with "prayer, journaling, self-help inspiration, and exercise." Dallas Cowboys coping strategies are prayer, music, and group mentorship.

Summary of Learning

There were nine participants, and the ages ranged from twenties to seventies. The participant's education level ranged from high school to master's degree. There were three males and six females. The employment status ranged from retired to non-employed.

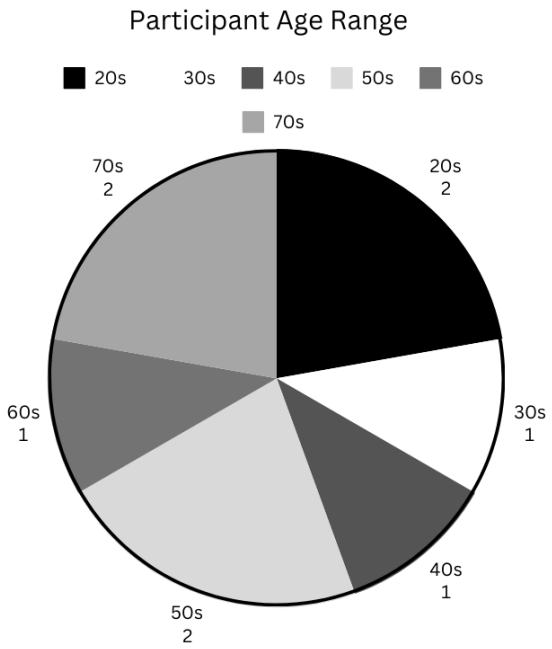

Table 1 – Participant Age Chart

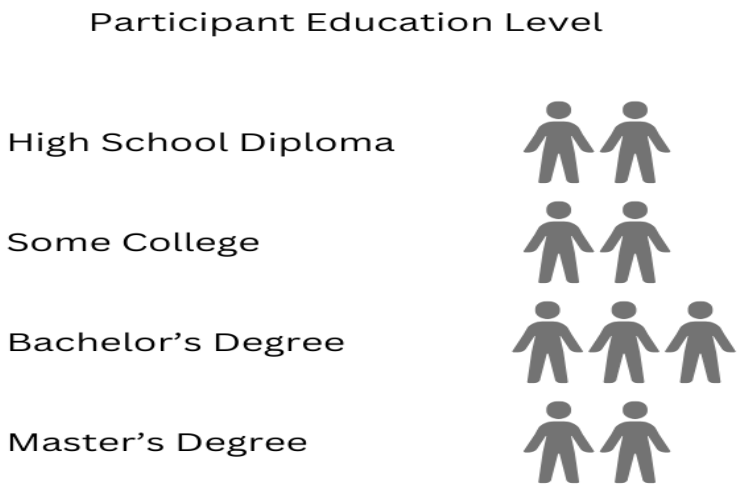

Table 2 – Participant Education Level

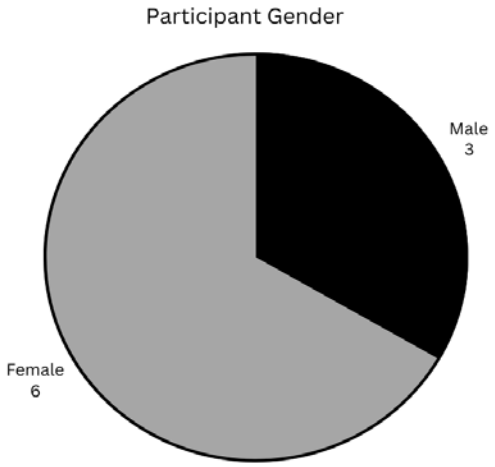

Table 3 – Participant Gender Chart

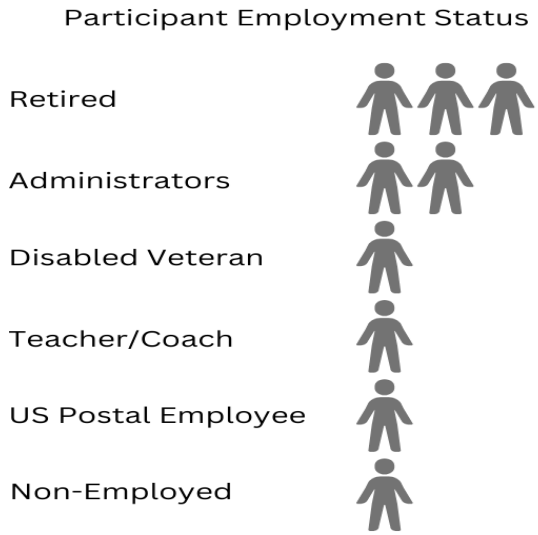

Table 4 – Participant Employment Status

During the focus group session, there was a wealth of information shared and a wealth of knowledge obtained. The first observation with the participants was when they were able to further elaborate on the meaning of trauma. Additionally, they were able to make a correlation of trauma and the psychological connection. This increase of knowledge was shown in the pre-and-post-test based on the terminology given of the definition of trauma. Additionally, they elaborated that trauma could be experienced multiple times and could be first and second-hand. Secondarily, with the pre-and post-test, the distinction was made between a first-hand experience and witnessing trauma first-hand.

With the post-test, 100% of the participants indicated that secondary trauma was a result of trauma experienced by a loved one, a family member, or someone in close relationship. It was interesting to learn that 50% of the participants felt that God allowed bad things to happen to good people because it was a mechanism being used by God to teach various lessons such as trust, hope, build faith, develop coping skills, and leaning

on God. All the participants learned attributes of God and the meaning of the attributes. All the participants gained a greater understanding of what it means to become a wounded healer, and they wanted to learn to operate as a wounded healer. Most importantly, they were aware of the need to heal so they could be effective in helping others.

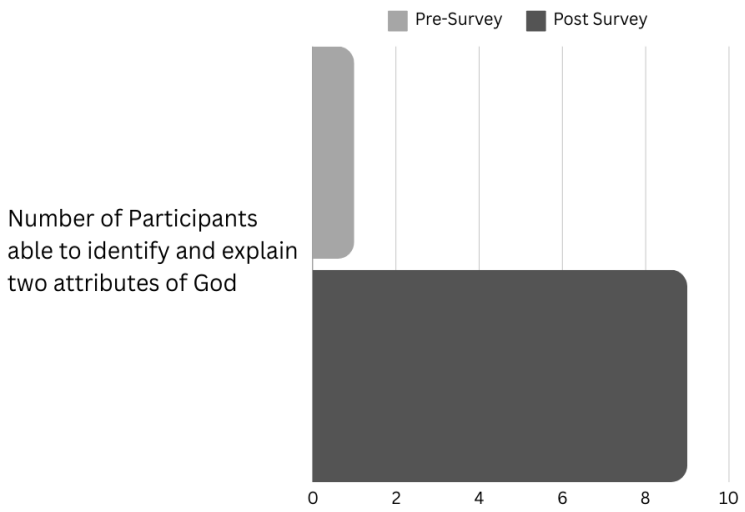

Table 5 – Participants Understanding of God's Attributes

Another takeaway was the importance of having steadfast faith. During the discussion, several participants indicated that they needed steadfast faith, and they referenced Joseph and Horatio Spafford. The participants noted that regardless of what was thrown at Joseph and Horatio, their faith did not waiver and it did not falter. Collectively, they both knew that God would work things out for their good. Horatio and Joseph embraced the fact that their woundedness was a part of their life-transforming journey. Their wounds helped to transform others. For Joseph, his wounds assisted in

saving Egypt. For Horatio, his wounds provided a hymn that has encouraged Christians for centuries.

While conducting the research on trauma, multiple themes were presented regarding the ability to manage trauma. Some of those themes were steadfast faith, love, refusing to hold grudges, and forgiveness. The research and the responses from the participants who were engaged in the focus group confirmed that these themes are relevant and necessary when learning to manage trauma.

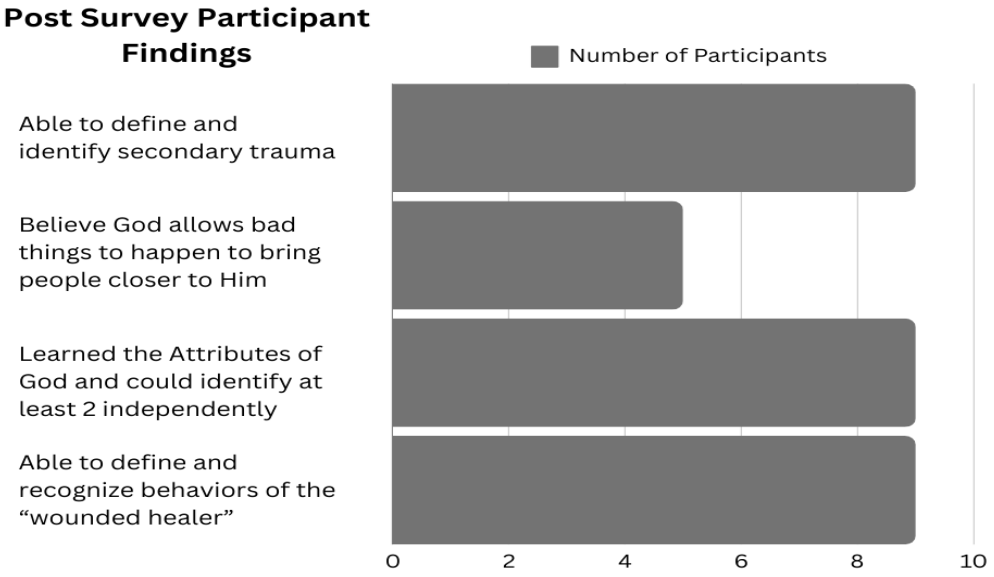

Table 6 – Post Survey Findings

The participants indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed the focus group discussions on trauma. The recommendation was made by several participants to continue to offer this class so that healing can occur. It was also recommended to open the classes up to the whole church because everyone experiences trauma and in some instances on many occasions.

Conclusion

The most important aspect of the project was to generate awareness of traumatic experiences and connect those experiences with the relationship of Christ. The hypothesis statement is if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, they can effectively manage traumatic experiences. When focusing on the mind, communication is the key factor. It is important to understand the ways to communicate and the effect of communication. For Christians, prayer is this essential form of communication with God. In this biblical text, the psychological counter to trauma was the ability to cope. Joseph was in the coping mentality because he allowed God to right the wrongs. Instead of malice and hatred, Joseph showed his brothers favor by forgiveness and practical affection. These attitudes are reflective of the attributes of God, being a Christian and being Christlike.

Jesus' life and death provides a greater understanding of the Han model. Jesus lived under a system of oppression and witnessed the Han of others who were marginalized and stood against the injustice caused by the religious and political authorities of that time. Jesus' Cross is a symbol of Han because the Cross belongs to a world of suffering, sin, violence, abandonment, and victimhood. The Cross also symbolizes the opposite side of Han - the shame and guilt felt by the oppressor, exploiter or perpetrator, and a reminder to them of that pain. Shame is experienced along with inner embarrassment and regret. The Cross represents Han of both the victim as well as the antagonist.

When a person experiences trauma they can effectively manage the traumatic experiences by their thought processes. The dualistic mind-body split that states the mind provides the capacity for thought and consciousness (the mind makes the decision), but the body carries out the decision. If mind and body are consistent with the study and application of God's word, then when thinking about the scriptures and word of God, an individual who has experienced trauma can effectively manage it. Therefore, an individual can make a conscious decision to believe the word of God, even during trauma, and proclaim that they can do all things through Christ who gives them strength. The power of the mind when coupled with the power of God can facilitate the ability to effectively manage trauma. The overarching correlation between the discipline of psychology and this project of managing trauma is the mind. If one can focus on biblical thoughts, scripture, and their relationship with Christ, one can effectively manage traumatic experiences.

In evaluating the success of the research, comprehensively, the research was a success. The hypothesis statement was supported by research, the life of Joseph, Horatio Spafford, and the research. All participants, including biblical characters, historical characters, and researchers agree that if individuals understand the theological consistency of God's goodness, then they will acquire the knowledge necessary to process traumatic experiences. Understanding God's goodness alleviates the thoughts of why God allows bad things to happen to good people. With the understanding of God's permissive will, God rains on the just as well as the unjust. However, just because you are in a rainy season does not mean God is not present. From a psychological perspective, if you embrace the rainy traumatic season, you will realize that God is with you during

the trauma. His attributes of all-knowing and ever-present helps Christians to embrace the fact that the devil may have meant it for evil, but God has the capacity and ability to turn it around for your good.

In evaluating the research project, there are several things I would do differently which is to extend the time frame to last longer than six weeks. I would extend the invitation earlier and provide more information to encourage attendance. Additionally, the research was rich and rewarding, I would like to turn the research into a book for others to gain a greater understanding on trauma and the ability to manage it effectively.

APPENDIX A

SERMON

Sermon Transcript of Pastor Vernon Shazier, M.Div.

Senior Pastor, River of Life Fellowship

Subject: A Theology That Tames Trauma
Text: Genesis 50:15-21 ESV
Genesis 50:15-21 ESV

> 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It
> may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did
> to him." 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave
> this command before he died: 17 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the
> transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you."'
> And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of
> your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 His brothers also
> came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."
> 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20
> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring
> it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do
> not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted
> them and spoke kindly to them.

Horatio Spafford was a well-known lawyer and senior partner in a law firm. On November 22, 1873, Horatio's family, his wife and four daughters, traveled to Europe for a family vacation. Due to a business meeting, Horatio was delayed and was unable to make the trip with his family. While the family was crossing the Atlantic Ocean, an iron sailing vessel struck the steamship Ville du Havre. As a result, 226 people were killed, including Horatio's four daughters. Horatio's wife Anna was the Spafford family's sole survivor of the voyage, and after making it safely to land, she sent a telegram to her

husband which read "saved alone." This experience tossed the Spafford family into the eye of the storm called trauma.[1]

Horatio Spafford's story resonates deeply and profoundly with me because on December 4, 2017, while in a church business meeting, I received a phone call from my wife informing me that my oldest son Ryan was injured while making a tackle during a Monday night National Football League game. The injury left him paralyzed and forced him into retirement from the sport he loved dearly. It was an injury that occurred when Ryan was living his best life, was at the top of his game, and was one of the most revered linebackers in the National Football League with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Like the Spafford family, it was an event that instantly tossed the Shazier family into the eye of the storm called trauma.

Please take notice of my use of the term family because when talking about trauma, no traumatic event is limited to the primary victim. Seated in the crucible of trauma, you will always find primary and secondary victims. Trauma is an event that negatively impacts the person, the family, the community, and society.

How do the Spafford and Shazier stories resonate with you? Have you been a primary victim of trauma? Have you been a victim of domestic violence, physical or sexual assault, or bullying? Have you lost a home and property due to a natural disaster? Have you been a victim of a severe car accident that changed how you live and move? Have you been a victim of a lost job, a divorce, or a bad doctor's report?

If you have not been a primary victim, maybe you have been a secondary victim of trauma. Perhaps you have received a phone call at one, two or three in the morning

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[1] Troi Penwell, *It Is Well: The Story of Horatio And Anna Spafford* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018).

informing you that a child or friend has passed. Or maybe it was not a phone call but reading a text that turned your life upside down. Have you been told by a loved one or someone close to you about their bad doctor's report, and their pain and trauma also gripped you? Have you witnessed a shooting, stabbing, or harm committed against someone else? Have you experienced the sudden death of a parent, a family member, or a dear friend?

My brothers and sisters, whether you are a primary or secondary victim of trauma, I want to suggest that you can tame life's traumatic events when you have a high theological view of God. What am I saying? I am talking about your God thoughts. I am talking about who you believe God is, what you believe about God, and what you understand regarding God's character, personality, or attributes. A. W. Tozer says, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."[2]

In our text that has been read for your hearing, we meet Joseph, a man who earned a Ph.D. in trauma. He is a hated sibling thrown into a pit by his brothers. He is a servant who was lied on by Potiphar's wife, a woman whose eyes gazed at him day after day until one day, she decided to solicit him to have sex with her. However, his character and integrity would not allow him to give in to her request. He is a forgotten prisoner by his cellmate, whom he was kind to despite the traumatic events in his life.

When you look at this text, hold it up and sit in it, you see a man who possesses a positive attitude toward God and who has forgiveness in his heart toward his brothers. What do the Joseph narrative and his words spoken to his brothers teach us? I believe the

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[2] A. W. Tozer, "What Comes to Your Mind When You Think About God," Cedarview, https://cedarview.org/resources/sermons/a-look-in-the-book/a-look-in-the-book-what-comes-to-your-mind-when-you-think-about-god-1#:~:text=Years%20ago%2C%20A.W.,Christian%20life%20almost%20by%20rote.

Joseph narrative teaches us that those high theological thoughts about God can tame trauma when it disrupts and disturbs our life because high God thoughts tame our human thoughts. Let me lift this text to you once more.

Genesis 50:15-21 ESV

> 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 17 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you."' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Gen. 50: 15-21.

The context of this narrative is that, even though Joseph has been dealt bad hands, even though Joseph has experienced not one traumatic event but a multitude of traumatic events, God favored and exalted him in a foreign land. He is second in command in Egypt and has been given all authority and power over the king's dominion. His brothers have discovered that God has kept, protected, and promoted the brother they threw into a pit. Nevertheless, their father has died, and they are burning and engulfed in fear. "Now that daddy is gone, will our brother Joseph take revenge on us for the evil and wicked deeds that we exercised against him?" They are at his feet, begging and pleading for forgiveness. Listen to what Joseph says, "You meant it for evil, but God allowed it to occur for good. Fear not." I believe Joseph can do this for only one reason; he embraces a theology that enables him to tame his trauma. He possesses a high view of God!

This is what I want you to understand. This text teaches the biblical truth that, amid all you are going through; the brokenness, the pain, the bad doctor's report, the

surgery, the tension in your family, what your children are going through or whether you are a primary or secondary victim of trauma, a high view of God and high theological thoughts allow us to tame our trauma. Why? Because high God thoughts tame our human thoughts!

Nowhere in the Joseph narrative can one find Joseph asking the question why. I have read this text over and over. Beloved, I have searched the text and read it back and forth repeatedly. On one occasion, I asked Joseph, "Joseph, don't you want to know why? Joseph! Aren't you going to raise the question?" But he never asks why. At least it is not in the text. I have been searching for a moment where Joseph asked God why because I wanted to know the why concerning my own trauma. God, why my son? God, why my family? I spent my days as a bipolar, schizophrenic person. At night I cursed, and I questioned God. In the morning, I repented and asked for forgiveness, vowing not to question and curse him again. However, when night came, again I paced my porch and questioned God, asking why. When the next day arrived, once again, I said, “I'm sorry God, I won't do it anymore.” Still, when night fell again, again I cursed and questioned God. I shouted to the sky, “God, I'm serving you! I'm preaching your word! I'm not perfect, but I'm doing my best! Why have you allowed this trauma to enter my life? Why have you allowed my son to become a paraplegic?” If all of us are honest, why is a question that we all wrestle with when we are in the crucible of trauma. Why? Why has God allowed trauma, trouble, and tragedy to step onto our doorstep, ring our doorbell, and enter our life? I believe it is okay to ask God why because God can handle our interrogatives.

Your question may not be why. It could be God how long? God where are you? When is this going to go away? When are you going to show up? It does not matter which interrogative you raise. It does not matter with which question you wrestle. You must understand that it is your God thoughts, how you view God, which enables you to tame your human thoughts. Your mind is pulled to and from and wants answers. Your mind needs to understand what has happened or is happening. However, your God thoughts allow you to stand, understand and accept that sometimes you will not get answers. Sometimes in life, the question "why" will not be answered. "How long" will not be answered. "When is it going to go [away]" will not be answered. You have got to trust that God is the God that this Bible says He is, and God is the God that He says He is. He is an Omni God amid your trauma, tragedy, pain, brokenness, and disappointment. He is that omnipresent God. You may not be able to see him, but that invisible God, that invisible spirit, his invisible hand is holding you. He is that omnipotent God. His power enables you to stand even in your trauma and walk in your pain and your tears. He is that omniscient God. He looks around the corner and sees what is going to happen. He is walking with you, not a piece of the way, but all the way. If you are going to tame your trauma, you must embrace the theology that says, "Lord, if I never get my answer, I'll still trust you."

During my bipolar behavior, I cried, cursed, asked God questions at night, and asked him for forgiveness in the morning. One day, I conversed with my godmother who said, "This has been going on too long Vernon. You cannot live in the grey. You're going to have to decide to trust God or not." My brothers and sisters, it was during that moment that I knew I had to get out of the grey. So, I crawled, pushed, and pressed my way out of

the grey, a place where faith is elusive. I said “God, it doesn't make sense, and I'll probably never understand, but if you're with me, and if you just keep me and keep providing me with strength, I will trust you no matter what. When the storms are raging, I'm going to trust you. When the sun is shining, I’m going to trust you. When the clouds are hanging low, I am going to trust you no matter what… in all seasons… in all circumstances, I’ll trust you.”

If you are living in the grey this morning, I offer you my godmother's words. You cannot live in the grey. You are either going to trust God or not. I choose, and I hope you will choose this day to trust the Lord. Lean not unto your understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledge and exalt him. When you have high theological thoughts of God, it enables you to tame your human thoughts. But is that all? No!

High theological thoughts of God also enable you to tame your human walk. It is in the Joseph narrative. In Potiphar's house, Joseph is the chief servant. Potiphar can visibly see the favor of God resting upon him and has given him control. Nevertheless, Potiphar has a wife who sees Joseph as a handsome, well-built young man. Day after day, she said, “Ooh, I like that. Come lay with me.” However, Joseph said no. Day after day, she said, “Ooh, I want you. Come lay with me.” Joseph said no. Then one day, when there were no servants in the house except Joseph, Potiphar’s wife became tired of begging and touched Joseph.

Joseph’s integrity would not allow him to dishonor Potiphar or God. Joseph cried, “How can I do this to a master who has been so kind to me? But most importantly, how can I do this to God?” Joseph had a consciousness in his God-thinking. He viewed God as a Coram Deo God whose gaze no man can escape. Joseph lived with this reality that

the eyes of God were resting upon him…gazing upon him. I will tell you something my brothers and sisters, it will change the way you live your life; it will change your walk; it will change your behavior when you live with that reality, that truth, that consciousness that the eyes of God are always upon you. I know we try to hide. I know we duck and dive, but one cannot escape the gaze of God. Oh, we try to hide behind the canvas of darkness. There is no veil dark enough. There is no wall thick enough. There is no car fast enough. There is no place you can run far enough to escape God's gaze. You can go to the north. He is there. You go to the south. He is there. He is there in the east and the west. There is no space that He does not occupy. Joseph says, "I cannot do this because my God is watching over me, and I cannot escape His holy gaze." Joseph understands that life is bigger than one's horizontal relationship. Joseph is thinking about his vertical relationship with God. Come close, do not miss this lesson. What is the lesson? What you do on the horizontal impacts your vertical relationship with God. Joseph runs from Potiphar's wife; she grabs his clothes and tears a piece off. Then she lies to Joseph. Joseph, for a second time, is thrown into a pit, but this time his pit is a prison.

True story, years ago, while employed at Motorola, an event occurred that I will never forget. I was on break and went to the company's break room. A young Afro-American lady was eating at a table when I walked in. About ten minutes later, a white Caucasian male walked in. I don't know what occurred on the assembly line that caused him to be upset and angry with the lady. He walked into the break room and immediately began verbally attacking her, cursing her, and calling her unkind names. I sat in my chair, shocked and boiling with rage. After he finished his barrage of verbal abuse, the lady stood up from the table, walked over to the vending machine, looked back at the

gentleman, and asked, “Rick, would you like a drink?” With a puzzled look, Rick responded, “Woman, are you crazy? After everything I just said to you, you want to buy me a drink?” He then turned and stormed out of the break room. As I sat there stunned, my curiosity got the best of me. I asked, “Ma'am, why would you let him talk to you like that? And why would you offer him a drink after everything he said?” She replied, “Oh, I leave Rick to God.” Can I tell you something? There is both an inclination and temptation in every one of us to want revenge when we have been wronged when we have been betrayed, when we have been hurt, when a friend we trusted has walked away from us, deceived us, or lied to us. We believe they must pay for what they have done.

Again, Joseph teaches us another lesson. What is the lesson? You will never be able to tame your trauma if you allow a spirit of bitterness and hatefulness to possess you. You must have the mindset of my co-worker in the break room. Man can say what he wants to say. Man may try to harm me. Man may try to break me, but he cannot because I have a God who is bigger and can handle man. I have a God who on Earth has no equal. God is big enough, and he is bad enough against your most formidable opponent. He can handle Pharaohs. He can handle bullies. He can handle people who mistreat you, who lay awake at night plotting and planning how to make your tomorrow miserable when you show up for work. Do you hear me? I am telling you that trauma can be tamed when you allow God thoughts to keep you and lift you above the marrow and the madness of this life. You must trust and believe in God. He is able. He is willing. Do you hear me? Fret not thyself of evildoers, nor be envious of their ways, for soon, God will deal with them. High theological thoughts about God enable you to tame trauma because they enable you to tame your human thoughts. They enable you to tame your human walk.

Can I share one more thing with you? High theological thoughts about God also allow you to tame your trauma because it enables you to tame your human talk. In the Joseph narrative, there is no evidence of Joseph mumbling a negative word. Oh, during my time of study this week, I asked Joseph many questions. In addition to asking Joseph, "Why didn't you ask God why," I also asked Joseph, “Why didn’t you punish anyone?” Yes, I was having a flesh moment. If my brothers had stripped me of my nice coat, thrown me into a pit, sold me off to a band of Ishmaelites to be put in slavery, then appeared years later asking for food… I do not know if I would have been as kind as Joseph.

If the cupbearer imprisoned with me had forgotten and forsaken me after I had interpreted his dream for him, I may have revealed to the king, “King! I could have been interpreting your dreams a long time ago. Do you know why I haven't? Your servant broke his promise, forgot about me, and left me in prison. The only reason he came back for me is to save his own neck!” I believe I would have raised those issues if I was Joseph.

If I was Joseph, I might have thought to myself, “it's payback time,” when daddy died. “It's time for you, my brothers, to get what you gave me.” Yet, what do we see and hear? We see and hear Joseph behaving kindly and speaking words of comfort. When his brothers are on their knees before him, he tells them, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for my good.”

I want to tell you that you will never overcome trauma if you constantly engage in negative conversations and are surrounded by discouraging people. Instead of helping

and inspiring, they reinforce your negativity. I want to tell you that you cannot live in the grey; in traumatic moments, you must choose to trust God.

Some years ago, a sports reporter asked Gordon Gund, one of the Cleveland Cavaliers owners at the time, a very profound and penetrating question. During the interview, the reporter said, “Mr. Gund, how could you, a man who is blind, pay LeBron James millions of dollars when you've never seen dribble a basketball? How could you, a man who was blind, pay LeBron James millions of dollars, and you've never seen shoot a basketball? How could you, a man that is blind, pay LeBron James millions of dollars, and you've never seen dunk a basketball? After about one minute of silence, Mr. Gund’s head rose tall, and he spoke these words to the reporter. "You are correct; I am blind. You're correct. I've never seen LeBron James shoot a basketball. I've never seen LeBron James dunk a basketball. I've never seen LeBron James dribble a basketball. I paid Lebron James millions of dollars because I believe the scouts’ report.”

I began the sermon by telling you about Horatio Spafford’s story, but you need to know that Horatio Spafford was able to tame his trauma. Why was he able to tame his trauma? Because he believed the report. How do we know this to be true? Despite his trauma, he was able to pen those words in that great hymn:

> When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
> When sorrows like sea billows roll.[3]
> Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
> It is well, it is well, with my soul.

[3] Horatio Spafford, “It is Well With My Soul,” Spafford Hymn. n.d. https://www.spaffordhymn.com/horatio-spafford.

I described my son Ryan's trauma, but you need to know that he was able to tame his trauma. Why was he able to tame his trauma? He believed the report. In his book *The Walking Miracle*, Ryan articulated that his faith in God got him through.

I've got to quit, but I have to tell you that Joseph was able to tame his trauma. He was able to tame his trauma because he believed the report God gave him through dreams as a young man. Joseph realized that God allowed him to go through everything he went through to put him in a position to be a savior for his family and others. I've got to quit, but I have to tell you that you can tame your trauma if you believe the report. You've got to believe the report that God is God, and above him, there is no other. I've got to quit, but I have to tell you, I love the Lord. He heard my cry and pitied my every groan. As long as I live and trouble arises, I hasten to his throne. I've got to quit, but I have to tell you, I came to Jesus just as I was. I was weary and worn, but I found in him a sweet ol' resting place and he has made me glad. I've got to quit. But I have to tell you, be not dismayed whatever betides you, God will take care of you. Beneath his wings, a love abides. God will take care of you.

Believe the report! Believe the report! Believe the report!

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